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# Severan Dominate



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*"The High Lords of Terra would bleed us dry for their purposes, at the same time that they refuse to help defend us against the xenos. The time has come to withhold our tithe, so that we may use it for our defence."*

— Duke Severus XIII, to the citizens of Lukius

The Severan Dominate is a confederation of worlds located in the [Periphery Sub-sector](#) of the [Calixis Sector](#) in the [Segmentum Obscurus](#) that has seceded from the [Imperium of Man](#) under the leadership of the former sub-sector governor of the Periphery, Duke Severus XIII of [Kulth](#).

It is one of the three factions (the Dominate, the Imperium and the [Orks of WAAAGH! Grimgoof](#)) currently battling for control of the Periphery as part of a massive conflict that has come to be called the [Spinward Front](#) by the [Departmento Muniturum](#).



A Departmento Cartographicae map of the Calixis Sector's Spinward Front, including the Periphery Sub-sector; Note: the front may extend beyond the worlds shown here.

Duke Severus I was unquestionably a hero of the [Angevin Crusade](#) that added the [Calixis Sector](#) to the [Imperium of Man](#) in the 39th Millennium. Without the [Rogue Trader's](#) influence and tactical acumen, the war to control the [Calyx Expanse](#) would have taken centuries to complete. Some historians even argue that the revered [Saint Drusus](#) might not have completed his conquests without the successes of Severus.

Of course, it was the duke's own failings that let Drusus surpass him. Severus' greed was his greatest limitation, as he chose to consolidate his holdings in Calixis rather than continue his task of expanding the sector. For generations that followed, the heirs of the Severus family have trod a path based entirely upon lies and loathing.

Their resentment built with each generation, as their desire for what was seen as their just reward went ever unfulfilled. Even across the centuries, this unjust fury had few consequences for the Imperium at large, as the descendants of the first Duke Severus descended into a family of marginal influence and power without their [Warrant of Trade](#) or the capacity to claim new domains and titles.

In 799.M41, the latest heir to the Severus lineage, Duke Severus XIII, became lord sub-sector of

the [Periphery](#). Even as the Calixis Lord Sector [Marius Hax](#) granted him the title, he feared that there might be serious ramifications to the appointment. Hax's hand, however, was forced in making the selection.

Severus had spent his lifetime establishing a powerful network of allies throughout the Periphery. Key among his allies were a few ranking members of the [Adeptus Arbites](#) within the Calixis Sector. The duke used these connections to eliminate any rivals, at the same time as he made certain that his own official records appeared spotless. Recent investigations have brought to light evidence that Severus may have planted witnesses, falsified records, and even sponsored assassinations among some of the most loyal noble families in the Periphery Sub-sector.

Unfortunately, none of these crimes came to light prior to the duke's ascension as ruler of the Periphery. With this authority in hand, he soon began reaching out to new connections, so that he might secure his holdings. In short order, he began to rapidly expand his holdings beyond the boundaries of the Periphery.

Soon, he had influence over a significant number of worlds, yet he did not report his expanded control to Lord Hax. Instead, he reached out to the enemies of humanity, including the [Drukhari Kabal](#) known as the Children of Thorns, so that his rampant expansionism and influence might continue unabated.

Disaster struck when the Orks of [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#) descended upon Duke Severus' holdings. Even as he attempted to marshal his forces so that they might defend the holdings, the Drukhari began to press the Human politician for ever greater access to the worlds he supposedly secured for their slave raids. As his holdings began to fall, Severus, out of desperation, turned to the Imperium for aid against the [xenos](#).



A female trooper of the Severan Dominate's armed forces.

The increased Imperial presence inevitably revealed the depths of the duke's betrayal. Evidence of his expanded holdings soon surfaced. Though he had planned to eventually leave the Imperium, the timing forced his hand long before he had completed his preparations.

Rather than succumb to the punishments that he so richly deserved, Duke Severus chose to consolidate his forces and secede from the Imperium, initiating the three-way conflict that soon consumed the Spinward Front.

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## History

### Tale of House Severan

Almost two thousand standard years ago in the mid-39th Millennium, the [Calixis Sector](#) was hewn from the [xenos](#)-haunted depths of the unexplored region of the [Segmentum Obscurus](#)

once known as the [Calyx Expanse](#) by the blood, sweat, and tears of the countless thousands of Imperial martyrs who prosecuted the [Angevin Crusade](#). The endeavour was a mighty one and only made possible by the combined efforts of numerous arms of the Imperium's military machine.

Hundreds of regiments of the [Astra Militarum](#) fought across worlds boiling with xenos corruption, millions-strong advances spearheaded by the elite [Adeptus Astartes](#). The skies were darkened by the massed fighter wings of the [Imperial Navy](#) while warships as numerous as the stars themselves burned across the void.

The war engines of the [Adeptus Titanicus](#) bestrode the battlefields like armoured gods while the private armies of the most ambitious of [Rogue Trader](#) houses fought in the hope of one day ruling those worlds wrested from the dead grip of nameless xenos fiends.

It was one of these militant Rogue Trader princes that led some of the boldest thrusts into the region, so deep into the Calyx Expanse that he all but broke through into the Wilderness Zones beyond. That man was Duke Severus I, the bearer of a [Warrant of Trade](#) granted to his line by the [High Lords of Terra](#) themselves. Yet, his name is all but unknown in the Calixis Sector, while those of lesser men and women are celebrated across a hundred systems and more.

The deeds of Severus I and his companions were so heroic that they should be known and celebrated across not just the Calixis Sector, but the entire Imperium. It was Duke Severus who unlocked the Markayn Marches Sub-sector by plasma-boiling the hideous xenos spawning seas of Cantus Extremis, breaking a deadlock that had stalled the advance of three million Imperial troops.

It was Severus who discovered and charted the [Warp](#) route between Dreah and [Iocanthos](#), when the fleet-masters of the Imperial Navy were convinced the path spinward must surely lie between the Prol System and Fedrid.

It is even said that a mighty Warp beast assailed the duke's flagship as he closed on Ganf Magna, the creature's vast tentacles wrapping about the vessel so that when Severus ordered an emergency translation into [realspace](#), the thing was dragged through too.

Weakened by exposure to the laws of the material realm, the beast was eventually defeated. But before it faded from existence, Duke Severus himself hacked out a single, crystalline eye several metres in diameter and worth the ransom of a High Lord of Terra.

As great as his numerous victories were, it was the duke's deeds in forging the Periphery Sub-sector that earned him true glory, for a short time at least. Of the [Heretic](#) and xenos fiends the duke's fleet confronted as it ranged ahead of the main Angevin Crusade advance between [Sepheris Secundus](#) and Sinophia, the few extant archives are all but silent -- the [Inquisition](#) and other bodies having determined such truths unfit for public dissemination.

In most cases, only the names of otherwise unknown battles remain. The Scouring of Cyclopea Nine; the Kulth Landings; the Retreat from Avitohol, closely followed by the Avitohol Reprisals; the War of Ash, in which a thousand xenos vessels are said to have been sent plummeting through the upper atmosphere of Sisk, the survivors ruthlessly hunted down by vengeful Human natives.

It was at the Second Battle of Kulth that the duke's greatest moment came, his armies counterattacked by a millions-strong horde of slaving xenos monstrosities.

Little is known beyond a faded entry in a crumbling tome, locked in the stasis vaults beneath the Lucid Palace on [Scintilla](#), stating that the duke rallied his armies in person, even as the xenos horde closed in on all quarters and all seemed lost.

The unknown scribe goes on to claim that Duke Severus faced a xenos being of such monstrous nature that his greatest champions were struck down by madness, but that he was not, delivering the killing blow with his own hand and turning the battle and the entire campaign in an instant.

The xenos hordes were put to rout and with them, those human-held worlds that had resisted the Imperium's advance capitulated. The region that would one day become known as the [Periphery Sub-sector](#) was opened up and a Warp route discovered that connected the region to the distant [Scarus Sector](#), ensuring its fortunes as shipping hubs sprung up along its length.

Why then, are the deeds of Severus I unknown to the peoples of the Calixis Sector? The answer is simple and lies in that most basic of [Human](#) flaws -- the sin of hubris. Duke Severus I had been promised much by the terms of his [Warrant of Trade](#), but in truth the [High Lords of Terra](#) had never expected him to survive the terrors that lurked in the Calyx Expanse.

Before being granted his title, the duke was a senior courtier of the [Senatorum Imperialis](#) on [Terra](#) and his political trajectory was carrying him towards a seat on that highest of councils.

His numerous rivals found this greatly disconcerting, for they believed Severus to have murdered numerous of his compatriots during his rise to power. These rivals engineered the granting of the Warrant of Trade, forcing Severus to embark on a crusade they hoped would end his ambitions, his career, and his life.

Severus was fully aware of the High Lords' intentions and when he succeeded in carving the Periphery from the darkness of the Calyx Expanse, he interpreted the terms of his warrant to justify him claiming it as his personal realm, exempt from the laws and demands placed on the rest of the Imperium.

In essence, Severus installed himself as the exclusive ruler of his own private empire within the boundaries of the Imperium, which in his eyes he had earned by the spilling of his blood and that of countless thousands of his followers.

In other circumstances, Severus I might have been allowed to realise his ambition, for the frontiers of the Imperium are often expanded by persons with similar dreams of avarice and power, only to be absorbed into the greater mass of sectors generations later.

This might have been the case with Severus, were it not for the simultaneous rise of a man who regarded him as a vainglorious and self-interested robber baron interested only in expanding his own domains off of the blood, sweat, and tears of millions of the God-Emperor's faithful servants.

This man was [Lord General Militant Drusus](#), the man who had succeeded Lord General Militant Golgenna Angevin as the leader of the [Angevin Crusade](#) that conquered the Calyx Expanse. While Severus had been conquering the Periphery for his own ends, Drusus had been leading the armies of the Astra Militarum in a series of victories every bit as glorious as those earned by the duke.

While Severus set about consolidating his power after the Second Battle of Kulth, Drusus fought on, claiming untold worlds for the God-Emperor of Mankind. Following his apparent death at the hands of the agents of rivals (which may, or may not have included Severus) and subsequent resurrection, Drusus was beatified by the [Ecclesiarchy](#) as a [Living Saint](#) and is celebrated to this day as the patron Imperial [saint](#) of the Calixis Sector.

Duke Severus was soon eclipsed by Saint Drusus and his plans to establish his own realm were cast to ashes. With every one of the leading lights of the Angevin Crusade openly worshipping Drusus as a paragon of the Emperor's justice, none would support Severus in his own ambitions.

For a time, Severus turned his back upon his former peers amongst the Angevin Crusade, eventually only speaking with the famous Rogue Trader Sibylline Haarlock.

What passed between the two remains unrecorded and some believe that Haarlock denounced Severus upon learning of his intentions to establish his own private realm.

By the time Drusus was pronounced the first lord sector of Calixis, Severus was a broken man. He died in 417.M39, less than a solar month before Drusus himself passed away. To the last, he

was a resentful, bitter man, turned by the cruelty of fate from a noble merchant-admiral to a paranoid recluse.

## A Fateful Deal

But Duke Severus I did not die the last of his line. Before he passed, he recounted his sad tale to his first-born son, and in the telling it must surely have been distilled into a hateful story of lesser men allying against one of whom they were jealous. The son passed the tale on to his son, and again the story was filtered in the telling until all that remained was a twisted kernel, only barely resembling the truth.

Generation after generation of House Severus heard, and then repeated, this tale of doom, until in 779.M41 Duke Severus XIII assumed power over what little remained of his house. Unlike his predecessors, Severus XIII had managed to claw his way up the rungs of power in the Calixis Sector, drawing upon methods and means yet to be fully revealed.

In 799.M41, he assumed the appointment to which he had worked his entire life, the position from which he might finally realise the dreams of his entire line. He ascended to the position of Lord Sub-Sector, the [Adeptus Administratum](#) prefect of the region his eponymous forebear had founded -- the Periphery.

But in truth, Severus XIII could never have gained ascendancy over his peers to become the recognised Imperial governor of the Periphery without the aid of the [Drukhari](#) group known as the Children of Thorns. This outcast Drukhari [Kabal](#), exiled from the Dark City of [Commorragh](#), is made up of the dregs of Drukhari society -- escaped slaves, disgraced nobles, and defeated champions -- and its members are ever watchful for opportunities to gain weapons and slaves they can use to fuel their bid for a return to power in Commorragh.

In aiding Severus XIII, the Children of Thorns Kabal has gained easy access to a region in which the Imperium's forces are unable to oppose their [realspace](#) raids. Thousands of men, women and children are dragged screaming back to the dark sub-reality sinks of the Dark City in the Labyrinth Dimension of the [Webway](#), yet there are those that question whether the Kabal's involvement in the wars of the [Spinward Front](#) might be more pernicious still.

Some fear that the Drukhari might be working towards another agenda entirely -- one that can only bring more doom and disaster upon the war-torn worlds of the Periphery and beyond.

His ambitions echoing those of his progenitor, Severus XIII believed that the Periphery should be his, yet he knew that overtly declaring secession from the Imperium would cause the sub-sector's Loyalist [Planetary Governors](#) to rise up against him and bring the force of the Imperium crashing down upon his head.

Instead, he sought allies in the darkness spinward of the Periphery, his spies seeking out any who might lend him aid, no matter their price. Waiting in the darkness, his spies discovered the Drukhari of the outcast Children of Thorns Kabal, and vile pacts were made in exchange for the aliens' lethal services.

Severus XIII consigned entire [Frontier Worlds](#) to the Drukhari's cruel mercies, ensuring that when realspace raids occurred, the sub-sector's military reserves were always too distant to intervene. [Xenos](#) chattel-barques swollen with slaves delivered hundreds of thousands of [Human](#) beings to their doom in the pits of Commorragh, while the court of Severus XIII gained a host of new veiled courtiers and black-eyed assassins.

For over a solar decade, Severus and his cruel agent-allies worked tirelessly to cut the ties between the Periphery and the sector at large, one at a time, so that none even noticed as it was slowly transformed into his personal realm.

[Planetary Governors](#) resistant to corruption or subversion were quietly removed, but always the eight worlds closest to the border with the Malfian Sub-sector were maintained in a state of outward normality.

The worlds spinward of them were entirely in the sway of the noble, who had at last attained his ancestor's dream of an independent stellar empire of his own in all but name.

## The Green Tide

None can tell what might have come of Severus' fiefdom had events continued unchecked. Perhaps he would have grown so bold as to risk openly declaring secession, or perhaps his shadowy allies would have turned upon him in his hubris.

Instead, it was another [xenos](#) species that decided the matter. An [Ork](#) invasion under the [Warlord](#) Ghenghiz Grimtoof, the self-titled "Git-Slaver," came crashing out of the darkness and fell upon the outermost fringes of Severus' pocket empire, slaying millions in a few short solar months.

The [Planetary Defence Forces](#) of these worlds were geared largely towards the suppression of their own populations, or else for blustering parades honouring their master in House Severus, and few were able to mount anything like a capable resistance.

World after world slipped from Severus' grasp as the Git-Slaver's Orks rampaged all but unchecked through his realm. There was nothing either he or his sinister allies could do to halt them.

Severus XIII brooded upon his granite throne as millions perished. His closest advisors counselled him to beseech the Imperium for aid, yet all were silenced by the executioner's blow.

At the last, his counsellors all dead or fled, Severus was left alone and his empire all but fallen. In a moment of grim revelation he saw they had all been correct. He dispatched his own kin to the court of the Calixian Lord Sector [Marius Hax](#) on [Scintilla](#) to beg for aid against the Ork invasion.

Though most of the messengers were intercepted by unknown assassins or fell prey to other, equally deadly fates, one got through. Severus' own granddaughter went before Sector Lord Hax and delivered the plea for aid. Hax simply laughed at her.

The patrician Calixian Sector Governor had been watching the Periphery from afar for years and knew well the treachery of Severus XIII, though how much he was aware of its origins, he did not reveal. Later hearsay implied that some link between Severus and Hax, some dark tie, perhaps even a blood tie, stayed his hand as Severus built his own private realm.

Yet, when the Orks attacked, it was to Hax's own benefit, for it humbled Severus and forced him out of the wilderness in a very public manner. At length, Hax agreed that the Orks must be checked and the Calixis Sector's military reserves were mobilised.

[Kulth](#), the capital of the [Periphery Sub-sector](#), was relieved, though in truth the Imperium never committed sufficient force to truly turn the tide against the Orks. The worlds beyond the Periphery descended into a churning cauldron of total war, yet so many Calixian troops were being committed to the secret war in the [Jericho Reach](#) that to many in the highest Imperial circles of the sector the endeavour in the Periphery seemed to have little hope of success.

Some whispered that those who prosecuted the distant [Achilus Crusade](#) had need of a war closer to home to mask the huge drain on resources, and so a deadlock in the Periphery was at best convenient, and at worst deliberately maintained.

## Road to Secession

Knowing that the people of the [Periphery](#) were devout adherents to the [Imperial Creed](#), Duke Severus had to manufacture a tale so that they would side with his desire for secession from the Imperium. Their faith was far too strong to have any hope of easily subverting it.

When the [Orks](#) assaulted and the [Astra Militarum](#) responded, the duke's time line had to be substantially accelerated. He no longer had the time he had expected to use corrupting government officials and subverting the population of his worlds.

Instead, he had to create a problem that would immediately unite the peoples of the soon-to-form Severan Dominate against the monolithic Imperium of Man. The motivation had to be extremely compelling, and all signs had to indicate that the time for peaceful negotiation had long since passed.

With this philosophy in mind, the duke decided to spin a false tale about supply shortages. Severus carefully began to redirect the majority of all shipments of food, equipment, and other necessary supplies away from the highly dependent worlds of the Periphery.

Without those imports, these worlds -- which were scarcely self-sufficient -- struggled to survive, particularly during some of the more treacherous seasons, when locally produced goods were in shorter supply.

At the same time, he began to increase the tithes of military units and supplies demanded from those worlds. The duke began to expand the roster of his private armies, under the pretence of providing additional soldiers for Imperial levies.

He selected the best and the brightest young warriors from numerous worlds, quickly growing his forces, while he also crippled the workforce for many of his own planets. In a few instances, he even coordinated his removal of units with new slaving strikes made by the Children of Thorns.

This combination of events conspired to make life miserable for most of the Periphery's residents. Just as the inhabitants of these worlds saw their vital imports dwindling; their production capacity became crippled by the loss of much of their workforce. This created a dramatic sense of unrest.

As some worlds suffered from famine, labour strikes began on others due to the extremely hazardous working conditions. In a few instances, cults emerged that preached about the evils of the Imperium, promising salvation for those willing to accept their unholy cause. In a matter of solar months, worlds which had been bountiful were soon approaching total political and social collapse.

Through careful monitoring, Duke Severus determined when each of the worlds approached their tipping point. He had to be certain that the majority of each world's inhabitants were thoroughly disillusioned. These citizens had to be irate and prepared to take dramatic -- and irrational -- action, out of a legitimate sense of desperation.

Once it became clear that the citizens were on the verge of revolution, the duke descended upon each world with a generous stopgap bounty of supplies and an adequate force of peacekeepers to both distribute vital goods and prevent a revolution.

As Severus worked to assuage the populations, he made certain that any credit for the deliveries were placed squarely upon his shoulders. The generosity that he had so clearly engineered at each world's expense became a hallmark of his virtue rather than a sign of his treachery. All the while that his reputation improved among the population, the duke blamed the High Lords of distant [Terra](#) for the shortages and the endless tithes.

In his earliest appeals, Duke Severus pretended to play the reluctant hero. He reminded the citizens of the nobility and necessity of the Imperial cause. He spoke at length of the inherent challenges of the galaxy, noting that it was only the grace of the Immortal [Emperor](#) that defended [Humanity](#) from the xenos and other horrors.

Of course, this was just a first step. Invariably, worlds played into his hands, lauding the duke for his beneficence while decrying the seemingly endless greed of the Imperium. On some worlds, the duke's followers had to seed dissidents among the population to begin the cries of secession.

Surprisingly, on numerous others, this was unnecessary. Even in these places where the citizens remained true to the [Imperial Creed](#), there were many who were willing to remain true to their faith at the same time that they discarded their loyalty to the government of the



Imperium.

On each world in turn, the duke agreed to consider the possibility of secession as a last resort, only after all possibilities for negotiation had been exhausted.

Then, as the emergency supplies that he had provided began to run dry, Duke Severus called for each planet's government to join him in the formation of a new government. Clearly a canny politician and a talented actor, the duke pretended that each world would be the very first to join in his new federation against the Imperial cause.

In each instance, the population felt that they were investing their lives and their assets in a new worthy cause that they had personally helped to create. This provided a sense of ownership, which dramatically increased their willingness to sacrifice even more than they had previously given -- under the pretence that they or their descendants might someday have a greater degree of freedom than allowed by the Imperium.

As the legitimate Imperial leader of the worlds within the Periphery Sub-sector, the duke initially had the full assets of the Imperium of Man to assist him in spreading his deceitful tales to the populace. This resource proved critical as he told his lies. Through his network of existing supporters, the duke was able to ensure that those within existing Imperial organisations continued to follow his directives -- or they were replaced by those willing to do so.

He was able to limit off-world communication and trade, ensuring that the only messages which reached each world were the ones that he sought to deliver, and that the only goods shipped were transported with his permission. Ultimately, the duke had to replace a significant number of [adepts](#) who remained loyal to the Imperial cause -- even under the threat of death.

In spite of this, he retained enough of the preexisting structures that word of the Imperium's tyranny and his own just revolution were spread to the people of the worlds he had overseen.

## Only War

While the situation on Kulth was stabilised, the war beyond the [Periphery](#) was going badly for Severus XIII. While the [Orks](#) plundered the worlds of Deluge, KW-9, Pertinax, and a score of lesser star systems, a myriad of other threats rose up. Despite the pacts Severus believed he had secured with the [Drukhari](#), the pernicious children of [Comorragh](#) launched ever more audacious raids against those worlds of the Periphery on the verges of the war zone.

Drawn by the near total collapse of the [Imperium's](#) power in the region, the servants of [Chaos](#), in particular the warband of [Chaos Space Marines](#) led by Sektoth the False Whisperer, launched a series of brutal assaults, pursuing their own blasphemous missions.

Beset upon all quarters, Severus XIII announced his personal annexation of the chaotic zone of space beyond the Periphery into what he termed the "Severan Dominate" until the crisis had passed. Lord Sector Hax was incensed, declaring Severus a Secessionist and a Traitor, and the war escalated to a previously unseen pitch.

The servants of Chaos now walk openly upon the war-torn worlds, doing the unknowable bidding of their masters, while the Drukhari raid where they will, their pact with Severus XIII all but torn up. The Orks have now entered the second phase of their [WAAAGH!](#), the focus shifting from slaughter to enslavement. The Ork [Warlord](#) has established his own bastion world at Avitohol and enslaved its Human populace so that countless millions of tons of ramshackle war materiel are being churned out to feed the greenskinned species' incessant hunger for weapons and munitions.

The lines are drawn and the pressure on the front is increasing, and it is only the far more pressing needs of the [Jericho Reach](#) fronts that keep the Imperium from flooding the [Spinward Front](#) with so many regiments of the [Astra Militarum](#) that all resistance is crushed.

Each standard year that the Severan Dominate is not brought to heel is another year it spends reinforcing its core worlds, and another year the Orks' strength becomes ever more

established. And all the while, the [forces of Chaos](#) move unchecked through the region, and mad prophets whisper of an imminent manifestation of [Komus](#), the dreaded [Tyrant Star](#) that has long afflicted the [Calixis Sector](#).

## The Dominate

As a political entity, the Severan Dominate exists only in the head of its titular figurehead Duke Severus XIII, and in the hearts of those of his followers who fight to maintain its tenuous borders. As far as the [Imperium of Man](#) is concerned, it is nothing more than a collection of rebel worlds dominated by an arrogant Secessionist, its peoples having betrayed their very [Humanity](#).

Despite the Imperium's refusal to acknowledge the entity's existence, its troops on the ground have come to refer to the rebels they fight as "Dominates," investing them with an identity and a cause, against which the [Imperial Guardsmen](#) can rally.

The core worlds of the Severan Dominate lie along the Calixis-Scarus Warp conduit, while a number of subsidiary worlds are located on lesser spurs of this great route. None of the core worlds are untouched by war. At various times, they are being attacked by the forces of the Imperium or those of Grimtoof Git-Slaver, while numerous other foes take advantage of the general anarchy that has gripped the region.

The [Drukhari](#) launch massive [realspace](#) raids wherever they will, their agreements with Severus XIII only barely holding, while the followers of various [Chaos Lords](#) operate openly and according to their own unknowable agendas.

The nature of [Warp](#) travel is such that war can, and frequently does, ignite almost anywhere within the Severan Dominate. Imperial vessels can drop out of Warp space at any point along the Calixis-Scarus conduit, making defence against such assaults all but impossible to coordinate in any meaningful way.

As disruptive as these attacks are, they are difficult to maintain over extended periods, and so they tend to be prosecuted by the elite of the Imperium's forces such as veteran Astra Militarum forces, [Storm Trooper](#) detachments or even the superhuman [Space Marines](#) of the [Adeptus Astartes](#).

The bulk of long term operations on the Spinward Front are concentrated on those worlds nearer to the [Calixis Sector](#)'s borders, where countless thousands of troops are fed into the meat grinder of total war each day.

The Severan Dominate faces enemies at all quarters, yet somehow, it continues to withstand them all, if only tenuously. Its populations still rally to the cause of their despotic master and willingly renounce the rule of the Imperium.

Severus and his agents have been able to separate the rule of the [High Lords of Terra](#) from religious devotion to the [Emperor of Mankind](#) in the hearts and minds of the people of the Dominate, supplanting the High Lords with Severus XIII while maintaining worship of the God-Emperor of Mankind.

Thus, Severus' agents preach that the High Lords are the true Traitors to the Emperor and to Mankind, while Severus is the rightful leader of the Dominate. The Imperium's brutal suppression of this notion is held up as evidence of Severus' creed, evidence that can scarcely be denied.



Severus XIII, master of the Severan Dominate

## False Philosophy

*"In hope lies heresy."*

—[Commissar Bennett](#), *Heresy and Retribution, Reflections on the Tactics*  
Imperialis

After engineering a revolution based upon the supposed tyranny of the [Imperium of Man](#), the duke needed to persuade his followers that his government would be a very different one. With this in mind, it became critical for him to draft a series of documents that granted his citizens a sense of empowerment.

It is important to consider, however, that Severus was never willing to actually share any of his authority with his followers. Ultimately, Duke Severus XIII is far more of a megalomaniacal despot than the darkest portrayal he provided to his people of the [High Lords of Terra](#).

In spite of this, he has successfully presented a public image that is completely contrary to reality. Creating and sustaining this image are the central tenets of his government.

The duke recruited worlds to join the Severan Dominate based upon the principle that he was a more caring ruler than the distant High Lords of Terra. To perpetuate this myth, he had to portray his government as one which was focused upon providing hope to his citizens. He realised that war -- with the Imperium and with [xenos](#) -- was imminent.

Severus also knew that all of his newly loyal population would accept the necessity of this war, for he had made certain that all believed it was their only true chance at survival. However, he believed that the mere promise of survival was not enough. Instead, he chose to present them with the promise of a glorious utopia.

The duke believed that such a promise might create a populace that was far more willing to make sacrifices over the short term, with the belief that these might pave the way for a paradisiacal future.

With this in mind, the duke has made promises to each of the worlds that are economically and politically impossible to fulfil. These begin with a core premise that all the worlds of the Severan Dominate will be made prosperous beyond their wildest imaginings. The duke has promised that miraculous [archeotechnology](#) will provide for all, so that all citizens should enjoy a veritable bounty of foods and luxuries, and that military service requirements might even be reduced.

Of course, all of his assurances are ultimately made with the caveat that his people must first attain victory. Although his promises are blatantly impossible, the duke has worked hard to create the illusion that he can deliver upon them. As such, he has used the supplies that he hoarded long before the revolution began to demonstrate his sincerity.

While those early stores were significant, they are hardly enough to continue providing a generous bounty indefinitely. In fact, due to some of the agricultural losses sustained during the early battles, these reserves grow more and more scant by the day.

Only the most trusted of the duke's associates are fully aware of this situation. In contrast, the average citizenry of the Dominate have become incredibly devoted to the duke, due to the early signs that he might manage to raise up his worlds to new heights, turning the [Periphery](#) into a shining example of an idealised [Human](#) civilisation.

On a few worlds, cults have even sprung up among the devoted followers of the [Imperial Creed](#), who have declared the duke to be a prophet of the Immortal Emperor. These zealots believe that anyone who could transform such a desperate situation into one that offered unbounded opportunity must be guided by His divine hand.

A further complication is that the duke has also promised an unprecedented degree of personal freedoms among the population. Within the Imperium, such liberties have historically varied substantially from world to world, based upon each star system's particular form of

government, subject to the standards of the local [Adeptus Arbites](#) and [Ecclesiarchy](#) prelates, but it is usually stringent.

The duke has suggested that under his authority, all individuals would enjoy the right to make decisions about how they live their lives. Whether or not he intends to deliver on these promises remains to be seen, but the very act of making these offers has enticed some to his cause while terrifying others.

In the absence of strong Imperial oversight, few of the region's citizens fully appreciate just how dangerous these freedoms could become. Such a liberal notion of personal freedom might even expose the populace to heresies, which could quickly draw the attention of [xenos](#), Renegade [psykers](#), or even the [Ruinous Powers](#).

While the general devotion to the Immortal Emperor might forestall such a crisis, some might even begin to advocate for religious freedoms that could handicap the power of the Imperial Creed to protect [Humanity](#) within the region.

A further concern is that the duke has no intention of ever surrendering ultimate authority over these worlds. He intends to make certain that any decisions made about personal freedoms and styles of government are made in a manner consistent with his choosing. To achieve this goal, he is willing and able to lie and cheat in any necessary manner.

In places where decisions might be made by some sort of an election, the duke sees to it that the elections are carefully rigged. On those worlds where governmental decisions are made by mandate -- hereditary, divine, or military -- those planetary governments ultimately answer to the duke. Though he is certain to maintain the illusion of choice and personal freedoms, none have yet been implemented, nor are they likely to ever be.

## Initial Assets

For centuries, the Severus family has gradually lost their holdings throughout the [Calixis Sector](#). Duke Severus I earned the rights to a substantial number of worlds, and leveraged those throughout his lifetime, leaving his heirs in a position to have a controlling interest throughout the sector's future.

Unfortunately, vitriol and vengeance were also a major part of their inheritance. Because of this, his descendants tended to squander their assets as part of a seemingly endless quest to clear the name of the founder of their lineage.

When Duke Severus XIII initially assumed his title, he had little more to his name than a dilapidated palace located on a world ruled by another sovereign. This was hardly a powerful position from which to launch a rebellion.

A flight of Severan [Aquila Landers](#) carrying Severan Ducal Legates to all corners of the Dominate.

Even before he assumed his title, Duke Severus XIII had begun to catalogue his limited assets and grow his network of contacts. From an early age, the duke held grandiose dreams, which he pursued relentlessly. Though he was always willing to take necessary shortcuts to advance his plans, his goals remained sharply in focus.

With his noble title came a limited amount of influence in the [Periphery](#), which he was able to leverage into connections with those who had greater power and assets, but lacked the trappings of Imperial [nobility](#).

By creating dozens of alliances with such powers, the duke managed to secure a broad variety of assets, including both military and political favours of considerable value.

It was not mere chance that led Duke Severus XIII to leadership of the Periphery Sub-sector.

He had chosen to target this location as his first significant holding for a number of reasons. Of course, the fact that the region was long associated with his ancestor's dream played a major part.

As it existed on the Imperium's frontier, it offered a degree of autonomy which would be unavailable in the heart of the Calixis Sector. There were also a number of physical assets which might be leveraged to offer a fledgling stellar nation some small chance of resisting the monolithic Imperium.

Key among these was the presence of the Warp Conduit between the Calixis and [Scarus Sectors](#). As traffic passed through the region, the duke knew that he could legitimately levy a tariff on some of that traffic -- along with bribes and the seizure of anything that he could reasonably label as contraband.

In a worst case scenario, the vital trade route might also offer an opportunity for piracy. If his situation were to become untenable, he might even flee to the Scarus Sector.

## Severan Diplomacy

*"Your grace, I beg you for reinforcements for our defensive efforts. The tools of the High Lords have us sorely outnumbered and outgunned. I do not know how much longer we can fight for our freedom."*

— High Marshall Jacoby Knowles of Kokytos, final message to Duke Severus XIII

When war erupted among the [Spinward Front](#), the Severan Dominate was hardly ready for an extended conflict. Duke Severus XIII had invested many standard years preparing for secession, but [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#) arrived unexpectedly. In short order, a two-front war enveloped the Secessionists.

A standard pattern [Lasgun](#) used by the Secessionist forces of the Severan Dominate.

Now, the duke continually scrambles in an effort to support his military, at the same time as he tries to preserve a tenuous alliance with the [Drukhari](#) of the Children of Thorns. With every possible resource in short supply, it is unclear how long he can continue the war against overwhelming opposition.

The only possible avenue for success seems to be leveraging his enemies to fight one another as he attempts to secure additional assets. The Severan Dominate's consistent philosophy towards diplomacy is exactly the same as the duke used in founding his fledgling stellar nation.

Every single measure is focused upon stalling an enemy advance through deception. No promise is too grandiose, nor is any lie too dishonourable. The Secessionists realise that their backs are to the wall. All of their choices are made out of desperation; Severus and his followers believe that morality is of little concern at this stage in the conflict.

### Ducal Legate

Duke Severus XIII has declared himself the sovereign ruler of numerous worlds with a wide variance in local culture. In order to ensure that his subjects accept the duke's authority and reject that of the [Imperium](#), he must have loyal agents to oversee planetary governments and militaries to enforce his will. These loyal men and women are known as Ducal Legates.

Answerable only to the duke himself, Ducal Legates are empowered to take any steps necessary to ensure his will is obeyed. Many of the citizens of the Severan Dominate base their loyalty to the duke on the belief that his methods are not so pitiless as those of the Imperium. To reinforce this belief, Ducal Legates rely foremost on diplomacy and dialogue.

However, should a local ruler or officer prove intractable, Ducal Legates are empowered to serve as judge and executioner. In such cases, those same skills of diplomacy serve to smooth

things over with the unfortunate's peers. Most legates are not above fabricating crimes and evidence in order to remove undesirable elements quietly.

Ducal Legates are just as zealous and ruthless as Imperial [commissars](#). Whereas commissars usually make this abundantly clear, legates tend to conceal it beneath a veneer of cordiality and concern for the local populace.

To preserve the reputation of the duke, legates prefer to operate through duplicity rather than overt violence. Legates often ask subtle or probing questions in order to direct the actions of local governments, which allows the local population to revel in its supposed "independence" without relinquishing any real control.

Of course, they are hardly above using such methods to fulfill their goals if it proves necessary

## Drukhari

The [Drukhari Kabal](#) known as the Children of Thorns has long tolerated and exploited the [Human](#) presence in this region of the [galaxy](#). Prior to the arrival of the [Imperium](#), the scarcely populated worlds of the [Periphery](#) presented a steady supply of slaves to be used for their needs in [Commorragh](#).

As the Imperial presence intensified, worlds which were once easy prey became increasingly resistant to the Kabal's slave raids. When Severus XIII offered to selectively lower defences against [realspace](#) slave raids in exchange for assistance in consolidating his power, the Drukhari were swift to agree to his generous terms.

Since their initial agreement, the duke has mercilessly condemned entire worlds to the Children of Thorns. Hundreds of thousands of Imperial citizens have gone screaming into the slave pits of the [Dark City](#). Outwardly, the duke has shown no remorse for these actions. He firmly believes that without the assistance of the [xenos](#), his fledgling nation might have already collapsed.

More recently, however, problems have begun to surface in the agreement between the Secessionists and the [xenos](#). As the Severan Dominate has lost control of worlds, their available assets have significantly decreased. As the duke is losing his stranglehold on additional planets, he is unable to consign the inhabitants of those worlds to a life of torture at the hands of the Children of Thorns.

Several worlds which have already been restored to the Imperium are no longer suitable targets for the slavers. This is increasingly true of worlds where the Imperium has chosen to maintain a significant number of reserve forces -- in those star systems, slave raids are often overwhelmed by the coordinated [Astra Militarum](#) efforts.

In reaction to this difficulty, representatives of the Kabal were swift to bring their "concerns" to the duke and his court. After all, their agreement to ally was based entirely upon his ability to provide them with worlds well-suited to their raiding efforts. However, as he continued to lose worlds, the duke's ability to provide such access became limited.

The fact that he has become increasingly dependent upon the limited number of worlds he still controls has only exacerbated the issue at hand. Unless there is a swift change in his fortune, the Severan Dominate might soon run out of worlds that can provide an adequate number of slaves to the Children of Thorns. The duke is well aware of the deteriorating situation, and has begun efforts to renegotiate the scope of their agreement.

Key to that negotiation is the issue of the compensation that the Secessionists receive from the Drukhari. To date, the [xenos](#) have provided the Severan rebels with a limited supply of advanced Drukhari [weapons and technology](#). In general, these armaments provide the Secessionists an edge only within a very constrained set of circumstances.

Additional favours have been promised -- including actual military support from the Kabal. However, that support has only materialised within a very few, specific situations -- ones in which the Children of Thorns were able to acquire additional slaves in the face of minimal

resistance.

As the Severan Dominate's resources have begun to dwindle and its needs increase, it has begun to try to press the Drukhari ever harder in their negotiations. This creates a situation where neither side is negotiating in good faith. Just as the duke and his representatives make promises that they have no hope of delivering, the representatives of the Kabal also have no intention to honour many of the Human lord's desperate requests.

To date, both sides have continued to pay lip service to their agreements, but both factions have also begun to push the boundaries wherever it is possible to do so. Both sides now recognise the deceptions posed by their opposite parties, and seek to take full advantage of the situation before everything completely collapses.

Each side has responded to the perfidy in its own way. On the part of the Severan Dominate, this has been to attempt to decrease the number of opportunities that the xenos have to take Human slaves. In part, this has meant better securing many of their isolated facilities from Kabal assault. However, this has not always been an effective deterrent.

The Children of Thorns have technology that exceeds [Humanity's](#), and the ability to strike at a moment's notice through the [Webway](#). In contrast, the Severan Dominate's resources have become increasingly strained by the ongoing wars.

Resources which they could not effectively guard prior to the agreement remain very poorly protected. Consequently, in spite of their best efforts, the Secessionists remain largely dependent upon the Kabal honouring its word to only strike at previously agreed upon targets.

In contrast, the Kabal have continually looked for ways to exploit their relationship with the Severan Dominate. As they consider the duke little more than a talking prey animal like all other Humans, they hardly feel any strong obligation to honour their agreements with him. As long as it serves their purpose, they are likely to continue to at least pay lip service to his nation and his cause.

For the time being, this also includes cooperating with him, for exactly as long as they can fully take advantage of his information and his assets. However, they feel no loyalty at all to his cause. In situations where they may be able to acquire additional assets without any added expense, they are certain to do so.

They feel no qualms about exploiting the duke, as they have every expectation that he treats them in the same manner. Notably, in the event that they can confirm an act of betrayal or accumulate strong evidence of his deception, they are certain to turn against him. If this were to happen, the Secessionists would suddenly add an additional front to their war -- one which might well spell their doom.

A further complication in their agreement is the loyalty of Severan Dominate citizens to the [Imperial Creed](#). A working relationship with these xenos is anathema to their religious beliefs.

To assuage this issue, the Severan-Drukhari alliance is secret; only the highest-ranking Dominate officers are even aware of their cooperation, and soldiers of the line are warned to ignore any scandalous rumours about the matter by Ducal Legates and other authority figures.

## WAAAGH! Grimtoof

Upon his ascendancy, Duke Severus XIII began to slowly make his ancestor's dream of his own realm a reality. Quietly, Duke Severus used intrigue and his vile allies, the Children of Thorns [Kabal](#), to make his domain functionally independent of the [Imperium](#) without stirring up sufficient trouble to catch the attention of the great powers in the [Calixis Sector](#).

However, the arrival of Ork forces in the [Spinward Front](#) added a new element to the equation -- one for which the duke had not prepared. Duke Severus XIII immediately began to fear that this complication would make holding his new domain untenable, as he lacked the power to oust the [Greenskins](#) but feared the results of calling for assistance from the Imperium, which

he had worked so hard to covertly cut off.

As the [Ork](#) numbers spiralled out of control and evidence of a [WAAAGH!](#) became undeniable, the duke had no choice but to take desperate action. It was his frantic plea for help to the Calixis Lord Sector [Marius Hax](#) that began the downward spiral into the current situation.

Were it not for the Ork assault, the duke might have had the time to complete his preparations prior to launching his secession. The resulting war could have progressed very differently if not for the Ork [WAAAGH!](#), or might not have occurred at all if Severus' quiet campaign of isolation had been allowed to continue.

Initially, the duke hoped to overcome the brewing [WAAAGH!](#) with the forces he had mustered on his own. However, he simply lacked access to the assets necessary to effectively resist an Ork onslaught of this scale. [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#) represented the most significant Ork threat to the Spinward Front in centuries.

During that time, countless star systems specifically designed to oppose an assault of this magnitude fell into disrepair. Rampant expansionism led to locations that were never constructed with the necessary defensive measures.

Some of the assets that the duke reassigned in preparation for secession had even been originally budgeted for use against a theoretical Ork incursion. Because he had misappropriated these forces and equipment for his own projects of expansion, they were no longer available for their intended purpose.

In spite of his best efforts, the duke had too few assets to defend all of the worlds threatened by the xenos. He could either effectively consolidate his forces to try to secure the most vital of locations, or he could remain thinly spread and let the Orks roll through and secure the entirety of his holdings.

The situation had become dire before Duke Severus XIII called for help from the Imperium, finally conceding to the words of the many advisors he had executed for voicing such opinions. By that stage, he had already lost a handful of planets to the savage Greenskin advance, and realised that he had little hope of retaining any of his worlds without outside assistance.

If these worlds were to be held by any [Humans](#), they would require substantial reinforcements. Of course, the [Astra Militarum](#) answered the call under their own authority, rather than ceding command to the duke, as he initially requested. Consequently, on those worlds where they were able to most effectively resist the Ork advance, the Traitor lost any control he might have had.

Sector Lord Hax used the Astra Militarum forces to subdue worlds key to the duke's fledgling domain, and thus brought them back to the Imperial fold. Some say the sector lord had even been aware of Duke Severus XIII's quiet betrayal, but had for some unknown reason stayed his hand, waiting until asked to intervene.

Losing worlds and resources to the Orks and the Astra Militarum, as well as the depredations of his capricious Drukhari "allies" and [Chaos](#) warbands such as that of Sektoth the False Whisperer, Duke Severus grew desperate and gathered the last of his domain into the "Severan Dominate," finally making his *de facto* betrayal from the Imperium openly known. Sector Lord Hax turned the forces of the Astra Militarum against the Traitor, aiming to retake the worlds he had claimed and cast him down for his audacity.

The Orks, for their part, continued their [WAAAGH!](#), either uninterested in or unaware of the politics consuming the Human factions around them. They continued to rampage across the [Periphery](#) and beyond, causing havoc for both the newly-created Severan Dominate and the Imperial forces alike, crushing and enslaving any world they reached.

Duke Severus realised that if he was incapable of fighting the Orks, his only chance for survival would be to redirect the savage horde towards other targets. Ideally, these targets would be ones of his choosing; places that the Imperium could ill-afford to lose. The duke's



belief was simple -- any Imperial forces committed to fighting Orks were not endangering his own holdings.

Unfortunately, herding the Orks proved more difficult than Duke Severus had hoped. Ork starfaring technology is based largely around travelling on the winds of chance, casting themselves into the void aboard barely-guided [Roks](#) and waiting until they crash into something worthwhile to fight.

Thus, when Duke Severus leaked information to the Orks about Imperial vulnerabilities and holdings, the Orks, in typical fashion, ignored them and continued their semi-random rampage across the region.

The duke has learned from this mistake, and has since begun a new strategy, attempting to draw the Astra Militarum into unnecessary conflicts with the Orks. Using intrigue and falsely-leaked documents, Duke Severus has drawn the Imperial forces to various worlds occupied by the forces of WAAAGH! Grimtoof, sparking battles between the two wherever their paths cross. Whether this strategy proves sufficient in the long run remains to be seen.

## Astra Militarum

From the perspective of Duke Severus XIII, the armies of the [Astra Militarum](#) represent the gravest threat within the [Spinward Front](#). This is not because they can overwhelm his strained military -- which they can. It is not because they can effectively stop [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#) -- though they have the assets to do this as well.

It is not even because they dramatically outnumber the forces of the Children of Thorns, and have the capacity to limit the [Drukhari](#) to little more than a force for piracy and raiding. The duke is terrified of the Astra Militarum because he recognises that the Imperium now holds him personally responsible for the secession of the Severan Dominate.

There are several powerful factions within the Spinward Front, all of them vying for control of the region's numerous star systems. All of them are extremely willing to take whatever violent means are necessary to secure their holdings. Only the Astra Militarum, however, are likely to be able to eliminate one of their foes by directly assassinating the duke.

Notably, the Astra Militarum are also the ones most likely to resort to using assassination as a direct means of eliminating him. This is at least partly because they realise that without his political savvy and drive, many of the Secessionists might quickly reaffirm their loyalty to the [Imperium of Man](#).

Severus XIII mistrusts the Drukhari. He justly respects the power of the [Ork](#) horde. In the end, he is completely terrified by the monolithic fury of the Astra Militarum. He accepts that in any sustained conflict, there is no reasonable chance that his forces could ever emerge victorious against the Imperium.

The Imperium's assets are far too vast for him to even fully comprehend. His only hope is to make the prospect of defeating him far too expensive in terms of manpower and resources compared to the pitiful return that his holdings could ever offer.

Ultimately, that proposition requires an effective holding action. If he can somehow sustain such an action long enough, it is very possible that a series of distractions might require the Imperium to redeploy their forces for use against more important targets.

This strategy offers only the faintest hope of success. Given the scope of the Imperium, there will always be other crises. Even within the [Calixis Sector](#), the clandestine [Achilus Crusade](#) continues to present a significant draw upon available assets -- though few people fighting in the Spinward Front are aware of where these resources are truly going -- to a region on the other side of the [galaxy](#).

If WAAAGH! Grimtoof were to bypass the Severan Dominate, it too could present a significant direct threat to the Imperium that might draw focus away from the Secessionist systems. Because of this, the duke's focus is simply on sustaining a holding action for as long as

possible, as he hopes that just such a crisis might emerge.

Duke Severus XIII has also taken steps towards engineering a catastrophe that might trigger an Astra Militarum redeployment. Even though his treachery against the [Emperor](#) has become public knowledge, he still retains a network of powerful contacts within the Calixis Sector. To date, he has offered dozens of bribes and countless promises of future reward to those contacts in the hopes that at least one of them might create a calamitous distraction.

While the duke might not be able to immediately repay such assistance, if a significant number of Imperial forces were diverted, he could have the time necessary to militarise even more of his holdings, better preparing his forces to resist the Imperial assault. With that act accomplished, any of his greedier contacts might soon be hailed as a powerful noble within the Severan Dominate.

It is clear that there are many influential people within the Imperium who would gladly exchange a minor role within its constraints for a powerful one among the Secessionists. The hardest challenge for such a Traitor might be avoiding the just retribution for their actions.

An additional complication for the duke is the fact that the excuse for his secession is entirely based upon a lie. The loyal followers of the Emperor need only recount their stories to Severan Dominate forces to convince them of the true nature of their actions. In contrast, Severus XIII must constantly invent new ways to continue to support his lies to his people.

As time has passed, the tales have had to become ever more extreme. To mitigate this issue, the duke has attempted to black out all communications between the Imperium and the worlds he controls. Further, he has created the Severan Ducal Legates to maintain his propaganda across the Dominate, and these insidious agents undertake any means necessary to enforce the duke's will.

This has been largely successful, but any Imperial communications that sneak through have the potential to trigger a catastrophe, if Secessionist forces learn of his treachery and renounce their loyalty to his false cause.

## Scions of Chaos

The fragmented warbands active within the [Spinward Front](#) offer a threat to the Severan Dominate, but that threat is tertiary to the Ork and Imperial presence. The duke is a rebel against the [Emperor](#), but he is not a devotee of the [Ruinous Powers](#).

While hardly familiar with the true nature of such [Heretics](#), he does recognise that they have betrayed the [Imperial Creed](#) in ways far more extreme than his own. As such, he regards them as a threat he must eradicate, but lacks the resources to entirely expunge them.

In the event that the duke's situation became more dire, however, his stance towards the [Chaos Space Marine](#) warbands in the region might also change. If he were on the verge of losing his core holdings, the duke might appeal to the agents of the [Ruinous Powers](#) for assistance against the Imperium.

Though he has given no direct indication of such an extreme course, the best intentions of desperate men pave a thousand roads to damnation.

## Sustaining Secession

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*"A soldier with a full stomach and a knife is far more lethal than one who starved while holding his lasgun."*

— Maxim of the [Adeptus Administratum](#)

The act of declaring secession from the [Imperium of Man](#) has proved far simpler than sustaining the state of separation. As he prepared to found his own discrete stellar nation, Duke Severus XIII spent years currying the favour of numerous planetary officials.

He built a vast storehouse of supplies by painstakingly diverting resources from worlds that had become dependent upon the imports. He oversaw the conversion of countless manufactoria from the production of materials necessary to sustain life, into forges required for the war effort.

These efforts were monumental, as they completely changed the economies and focus of billions of lives on dozens of worlds.

In spite of the years of effort, it was hardly enough to begin the process. Though his plans were carefully laid, [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#)'s arrival quickly revealed their limitations.

A significant portion of the reserves that had been so carefully diverted were expended fighting against the xenos assault. The [Orks](#) even managed to seize some of these supplies, so that they served the efforts of the invaders rather than the cause of the Severan Dominate.

The arrival of the [Astra Militarum](#) soon added another layer of complication. While most of the resources had been moved to worlds beyond the [Periphery](#), some had been maintained closer to the [Calixis Sector](#). After all, the duke had expected from the outset of his plans that he would need to hold those star systems.

Yet the Imperial response was far swifter than his plans had accounted for. When they arrived, many of his forces were improperly deployed. Assets that should have been transferred to more secure locations remained vulnerable. His officers failed to issue orders in time, and his forces failed to defend a number of manufactoria and resources that were essential to the war effort.

In short order, the duke discovered that these two events had very nearly undone his years of preparations. The fledgling domain had sufficient reserves to maintain its resistance and keep its populace fed and clothed for a few solar months, but it could not sustain this effort for any reasonable length of time.

Severus spent countless solar hours in meetings with his most trusted advisors. He exhausted his personal [astropaths](#), sending and receiving a flurry of messages to all of the worlds within his domain. He even reallocated a few of his personal luxuries so that they could instead be used to supply the ongoing revolution.

The initial efforts were hardly enough. The duke studied endless scrolls of reports and finally accepted the cold facts. The reserves of the [Orks](#) and the Imperium of Man were far greater than those of the worlds within his holdings. If the revolution were to continue, he absolutely had to secure outside assistance.

Of course, such assistance would not come cheaply. In order to stabilise his realm, he had to find groups willing to support his cause, but he also had to be certain that the new stellar nation could afford to repay the debts that it would incur.

In order to secure vital wartime resources, the Severan Dominate had two options. The first was to engage in productive trade relationships. By parlaying their resources -- especially those which were not particularly relevant to the military cause -- they could secure some of the goods required.

Of course, most prospective trade partners were already aware of the desperate nature of the current situation. This led to terms that were hardly favourable, though given the risks inherent in dealing with a government of known Traitors, this was not surprising.

In spite of this, the duke and his [planetary governors](#) have signed many trade agreements of this nature. A few have begun to meet with preliminary success, while others were clearly the work of thieves and con artists.

The duke's only alternative is to establish alliances with promises of future recompense. In virtually all instances, the promises required have been completely out of proportion to the materials received. A few of the duke's advisors have begun to speculate about the potential consequences of the treaties currently on file.

By their calculations, if the Severan Dominate manages to maintain its independence for a standard century after the completion of the war effort, they will have only repaid two percent of the favours currently promised. In essence, these agreements have created a situation that is almost certain to bankrupt the fledgling stellar nation.

In the event that they manage to successfully maintain their independence from the Imperium, the rebel star systems may, in essence, exist in servitude to their treaty partners for the millennia that follow.

In spite of this seemingly disastrous economic future for the Dominate, the duke cannot afford to relent in his efforts to find additional allies and trading partners. The agreements made to date are unlikely to be enough to preserve the Severan Dominate through the current crisis.

Severus only holds power through the support of his planetary governors and his people. His political presence has effectively persuaded them to support his cause, even making substantial sacrifices in order to fend off the tyranny of the Imperium. Unfortunately, his cause is built upon a bedrock of lies and half-truths.

At the same time he has worked to curry favour with outsiders, he has had to maintain this falsehood to his most loyal followers. If the planetary rulers were to learn of the agreements made in their name, it is likely that many of the planets under the duke's control might withdraw their support and attempt to seek to return to the relative stability and semblance of safety provided by the Imperium of Mankind and its vast, unyielding forces.

## Additional Allies

The Children of Thorns have been the Severan Dominate's closest ally since before the confederation formally seceded from the Imperium. As the war effort has become more challenging, the duke has attempted to broaden their relationship.

To date, these efforts have not met with a great deal of success. The [Drukhari Kabal](#) is fully aware of the many problems that the Secessionists have encountered. Not only are they wary of the duke's promises, they have also begun to undermine their agreements when they believe it is to their advantage.

Because of this, the duke has begun to turn to new contacts in the hopes of finding further assistance from any group willing to offer its aid. A wise man might not risk relationships with many of these factions, but at this point, the duke has set aside what wisdom he might have had in the face of raw desperation.

## Rogue Traders

A number of [Rogue Traders](#) ply their way among the stars beyond the [Periphery Sub-sector](#). The untamed worlds within this region are ripe for conquest by those who have a well-equipped vessel and the will to employ it.

Those who bear a sacred [Warrant of Trade](#) are generally bound to stay true to the laws of the [Imperium of Man](#) when they travel within its bounds. Of course, since the secession, a few of the boldest Rogue Traders might argue that they have full authority to execute trade within the Severan Dominate.

Officers of the [Imperial Navy](#) are unlikely to agree with this viewpoint, but they are also unlikely to open fire upon a Rogue Trader's fleet without at least some discussion.

At least two Rogue Trader dynasties -- who are desperate, daring, or both -- have chosen to work with the Severan Dominate. Though neither has agreed to provide the Secessionists with military assistance, both have entered into extended trade relationships.

Their dynasties' fleets have begun hauling cargo from Severan Dominate worlds to star systems within the [Calixis Sector](#). Officially, all of the goods originate from confidential worlds beyond the domain of the Imperium of Man, and they never provide any trade goods which

might be used in a military action against the Imperium. Unofficially, it is clear that the dynasties have some wiggle room in the terms of their warrants -- or else they are just ignoring their responsibilities.

The trade agreements have opened up a limited flow of supplies to the Severan Dominate. The primary advantage is that the goods are of Imperial manufacture, so the materials imported are consistent with equipment that the Secessionist already have in place.

Ultimately, this can only present a short-term solution. None of the Rogue Traders suspected of involvement with the Secessionists have the capacity to even begin to fulfil the duke's requirements over the long term. Unless they were to substantially increase their transport capacity, the Traitors must soon find additional avenues of support.

### Scarus Sector

The Warp Conduit to the adjacent [Scarus Sector](#) offers an additional route that the duke and his followers have attempted to exploit. The major advantage to this approach is that Imperial forces have not yet attempted to advance against the Secessionists through this route.

Some of the duke's military advisors believe that this may be due to the actions of the Calixis Lord Sector [Marius Hax](#). Their theory is that he is attempting to keep the secession as a Calixis Sector matter, rather than one that threatens the Imperium as a whole. This could be due to Hax's ego, or it might be an effort to channel additional Imperial resources through the sector's authority for unknown purposes.

Unless the Scarus Sector authorities move to blockade the Warp Conduit, this remains an open trade route between the Severan Dominate and the greater Imperium. Official channels prohibit any trade, but they are not the only ones with voidships capable of hauling cargo.

Further, there is some evidence that the Scarus Sector authorities may not be fully aware of the existence of the Severan Dominate. Because of this, trade has generally continued unimpeded between this region and the worlds beyond the [Periphery](#).

A number of criminal interests have already committed to trading goods with worlds under the duke's control. However, both the duke's forces and the syndicates have very limited access to vessels capable of transporting supplies in any significant quantities. As a consequence, the deliberate trade through this passage has been limited.

That has not, however, completely shut down the passage, nor has it eliminated it as a potential avenue of future success. Severan Dominate forces have begun to engage in acts of piracy against Imperial vessels using the Conduit. Some of these actions have been undertaken simply to acquire goods necessary for the survival of the Secessionist worlds, but others have focused upon attempting to capture intact vessels.

If this tactic meets with success, it might significantly increase the capacity of this supply chain. Alternatively, the Scarus Sector might have to take more direct actions to protect voidcraft that have left their region of space through the Warp Conduit.

If this were to occur, the Severan Dominate might soon be engaged with Imperial forces on another front, where they are even less prepared to do battle.

### Calixis Sector

Within the larger scope of the [Calixis Sector](#), there are countless small groups that have grown restless under Imperial rule. [Inquisition](#) forces work to overcome these [Heretics](#) on a daily basis. However, within the varied worlds of the region, there are far more threats than even the sector capital world of [Scintilla](#) can effectively manage.

While some of these Traitors seek to overthrow their authorities, others simply seek a life free of Imperial oversight. A few groups are even desperate enough to commit to fighting an extended war against the Imperium.

Duke Severus XIII and his allies have attempted to reach out to some of these heretical

groups. His forces face an inherent challenge, in that locating the groups is even more difficult for the Secessionists than for the Inquisition, as the Traitors cannot easily travel through Imperial space.

Conversely, a few heretical groups have begun to initiate contact with the Secessionists of their own accord.

Currently, the largest challenges in working with these Traitors are establishing secure communications and transportation between the Severan Dominate and the Calixis Sector. The [Imperial Navy](#) has committed a number of warships to blockading any vessels that might attempt to travel between the worlds beyond the [Periphery](#) and the rest of the sector.

The voidcraft which regularly make the journey must use circuitous paths and lesser known routes through the [Warp](#), which typically results in a much longer transit time.

To date, such alliances have yielded only a minimal amount of support, but could have significant benefits, unless the Imperium moves to stop it.

The Inquisition has been made aware of these threats and has begun to rigorously investigate all leads. However, if additional Imperial assets need to be diverted to deal with uprisings within the Calixis Sector, it might buy the Severan Dominate additional time to reinforce their current holdings.

## The Order

Recently, a small group of individuals calling themselves "the Order" discretely approached the duke, offering their support in the secession efforts. They were able to initiate direct contact with him at a time when he was effectively isolated behind the extensive security of a Severan Dominate military outpost.

As none of his advisors were present for the meeting, the duke recounted the individuals in great detail, presenting a formal treaty that his contacts had provided. The agreement was extraordinarily generous, promising manpower, supplies, and access to troop reserves that might prove adequate for years.

In exchange, the Severan Dominate had only to concede to a number of strange, seemingly meaningless requests including the transfer of a number of specified individuals to their custody and the removal of three members of the duke's court.

The duke presented the treaty to his advisors after signing it, but has had no further communication with the Order. He insists that the meeting took place, and the lavish scrollwork of the physical treaty provides compelling evidence of the agreement. However, none have witnessed any action from the Order since.

Some of the duke's counsellors suspect that the duke might have gone mad, forging the treaty entirely as a desperate ploy to buy time. Others now fear that a [psyker](#) or [witch](#) might have been involved in the agreement.

They believe that the duke could have condemned the entire Severan Dominate to an eternity of darkness. Only the duke knows for certain what the secret meeting truly entailed, but he grows increasingly insistent that he has secured the salvation of his domain.

## Reallocation of Assets

In addition to trying to identify outside resources, the Severan Dominate has also begun to look for additional ways to utilise the worlds they already control. In most cases, the scope for this is limited.

Attempting to build the infrastructure for agriculture on a barren world requires far more time and effort than Duke Severus can currently afford. Similarly, the number of potential recruits is ultimately limited by the current populations of the worlds controlled.

Fortunately for the Traitors, some assets may be leveraged to provide resources that can

sustain the war effort on the [Spinward Front](#).

## Raw Materials

One of the most important assets for the Severan Dominate is food. The populations of their worlds must grow and thrive if they are to sustain the secession. The population has already sacrificed millions of lives, but they are certain to need to sacrifice countless more.

Even with their losses to date, the traitorous worlds have barely enough agricultural capacity to feed their current population. In order to maintain a level of population growth that can compensate for the losses of the war, the duke has begun to initiate significant changes to agriculture and food production.

This is certainly limited by the climates and ecosystems of the worlds held by the Dominate. Many worlds are dependent upon imported food. Others may be able to grow plants or livestock on only a portion of the surface.

The duke has begun to transplant agriculture experts from some of his [Agri-worlds](#) to places where the climate might have the potential for agriculture. He has also had these same experts analyse various forced growth techniques, so that overall efficiency and production may be improved.

Adopting such changes on the enormous scale required is a slow process, but to date, this seems to be the most attainable change that the duke has undertaken.

Other efforts to obtain raw materials have met with significantly lesser degrees of success. The duke's advisors have initiated several mining and deforestation efforts. To date, none of these have identified useful locations or unexpected reserves of materials.

In two instances, attempts to use materials acquired from alternative sources actually significantly slowed manufacturing capacities. This was because the substitute products were largely incompatible with the techniques already in place at manufactoria.

## Manufactured Goods

The Severan Dominate has a limited capacity for manufacture. All of it is dependent upon the cooperation of representatives of the [Machine Cult](#).

For the most part, the [Adeptus Mechanicus](#) have withdrawn their support of the Secessionists. In a few cases, manufactoria had to be shut down when key components were destroyed or hidden.

In many other cases, unskilled labourers continue to toil in the vast manufactoria without the oversight of the [tech-priests](#). Many workers have already lost their lives due to malfunctions caused by negligence and misuse.

To overcome this, the duke and his advisors have worked to identify individuals who have parted ways with the Adeptus Mechanicus, such as [Heretek](#)s. In many instances, this has left the Secessionists dependent upon madmen, who are far more concerned with their own experimentation than the Severan revolution.

As the Traitors continue to deplete their initial reserve of manufactured goods, they have had to utilise more and more equipment that was assembled without expert oversight.

Unless something changes soon, the Secessionists might have to find alternative sources for their supplies, or they could become unable to equip their military forces.

## Exploration

The duke's last desperate ploy for goods has been a renewed focus upon exploration. The chance of success is desperately slim, but his advisors hope that the God-Emperor might grant them some reprieve.

If the Secessionists could identify another world with significant resources, it might

substantially sustain their battles against the Imperium. The best option might be to discover a long-lost [Human](#) colony world even further beyond the [Periphery](#), where there are said to be countless more caches of [archeotechnology](#) like those already found within the [Spinward Front](#).

Of course, reaching these fabled treasures is no easy task, and Duke Severus has few allies capable of undertaking such endeavours.

## Holding The Fronts

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*"Captain, this manufactorum cannot fall. It is more important than you, your troops, or the population of this planet. Expend every available resource to keep it from the enemy."*

—Planetary Overgovernor Worthington Derrymore

The Severan Dominate is a comparatively small domain under assault by two vast forces, in the form of the [Imperium](#) and [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#). Other, smaller groups, including [Chaos](#) warbands and the Dominate's ostensible allies, the Children of Thorns, have also targeted their assets.

The Secessionists were scarcely prepared for war when they split with the Imperium, and the ongoing depletion of their resources has not helped. Duke Severus XIII is a canny and power-hungry individual, but he prefers to rely upon misdirection and deception rather than direct confrontation. This combination of desperation and lies is represented in the Severan Dominate's battle strategy in the same way that it is clear in their political approach.

From one perspective, this is a perfectly reasonable and responsible approach. If the Severan Dominate is to survive, it can ill-afford significant losses. The conundrum is that exerting such a conservative effort provides the Severan Dominate with only minor gains from its victories. Using this approach, the best they can hope for is to minimise their losses against the inexorable advance of both the Loyalist forces and the [Ork WAAAGH!](#)

Unless the Secessionists manage to make effective use of the time that they have garnered, this is destined to end in a losing effort. To date, several of Duke Severus' military advisors have brought this matter up repeatedly.

So far, the duke's only response is to offer assurances that additional developments are in progress, and that the time is being well spent. However, Imperial sources have not been able to confirm that any such processes are likely to bear fruit within a realistic time frame.

The war remains an ongoing effort on many fronts, but unless something significant changes in the upcoming months and years, the outcome seems inevitable.

### A Defensive Effort

Each of the worlds that belong to the Severan Dominate is a precious commodity. All of them provide some resource that is vital to sustaining the war effort.

Some contribute raw materials, which may be turned into vital weapons on other worlds. A few primarily provide citizens to join the Secessionist armies. In a war of this scope, every contribution is vital. If the Secessionists are to succeed, every commodity sacrificed before the altar of war must exact a tremendous price from the foe.

The duke has preached this philosophy endlessly to those in command of his armies. In at least four instances, he has recalled a commanding officer because he felt that actions taken within a particular theatre of war were unacceptably daring.

In all instances, this was in spite of the fact that those actions had met with significant levels of success. At this stage, it is very clear that the duke's military philosophy is unyielding. It is also clear that he is unwilling to accept the advice of those with greater tactical training and acumen. This has significantly limited the tactical flexibility of those under his command.



In reaction to this crackdown, many of the Severan Dominate officers have become extremely conservative in their tactical decisions. With very few exceptions, the Secessionists have devoted a substantial portion of their forces towards the construction of bunkers and other defensive installations.

Now, these commanders see fortifications as the core of any strategy. Offensive strikes against Imperial forces are now far rarer than they were during the initial stages of the conflict.

On several planets, commanding officers have taken this to an extreme. Sorties and scouting missions have actually been eliminated, and the Secessionists have conceded any effort at aerial superiority. Military units normally assigned to vehicles have instead dismantled their war machines, so that the components could be transformed into immobile defensive structures.

These decisions have clearly made the defenders far more vulnerable to a carefully planned and executed assault. At the same time, the Secessionists have sustained significantly fewer casualties as they have implemented these commands.

It seems improbable that the Severan Dominate could hope to win with this strategy, but they are clearly less likely to lose the war over the short term, as long as they are able to keep their supply chains intact and flowing.

## Minimise Waste

In conjunction with the notion of sustaining a defensive effort, the duke has also commanded that his forces are to avoid unnecessary losses, at all costs. This directive applies not only to the soldiers, but also to their equipment, and to the commodities they defend.

Again, this is in keeping with the core Severan Dominate philosophy, that their resources are finite, particularly in comparison to those of their greatest foes. Further, they are also to make certain that time is not to be wasted. Idle hands are to be put to good use, whenever possible. If they have any hope of persevering, all must make a constant and concerted effort.

This represents a significant change in tactical philosophy from that originally used to train many of the officers who learned under the *Tactica Imperialis*. Many Astra Militarum commanders are completely dependent upon using a vast wave of soldiers to overcome a target. Commissars are renowned for their willingness to execute soldiers who hesitate in combat.

The Secessionist forces eschew both of these approaches. Instead, they actively attempt to rehabilitate any troopers who show signs of cowardice or treachery. Human wave tactics are replaced, whenever possible, by artillery bombardments.

In this same vein, the soldiers of the Severan Dominate -- as well as its citizens -- are never to stand idle. Their days are rigorously planned out, and seldom involve any meaningful amount of downtime. Between deployments, Secessionist forces are frequently assigned to duty within manufactoria, on Agri-worlds, and even within mines.

In many instances, products leave manufactoria only partially prepared for battle, so that machines and labourers may be assigned other tasks. Soldiers must commit additional time to unpack and finalise clean-up on their arms and munitions before they can be put to work.

In general, this is done during time that might otherwise be assigned to drills or calisthenics -- often, hauling the massive crates provides an adequate physical training regimen.

Troops are also trained to take care to salvage materials whenever possible. Leftover food is saved and reused. Damaged goods are typically repaired rather than replaced. In many cases, this has left the Secessionists wearing threadbare uniforms and using well-worn equipment.

Generally, these are superficial issues that would only play a factor during a formal inspection. However, few of the soldiers have the necessary training to perform effective field repairs. As

time has passed and equipment has continued to exceed its planned life expectancy, the Traitors have had to deal with increasingly unreliable gear.

Of course, this tenet is in direct conflict with the duke's alliance with the Children of Thorns. The Severan Dominate has willfully sacrificed a significant portion of their holdings, including their citizens, to the cruel desires of the [xenos](#).

The duke feels no regret for this agreement, but he is unwilling to discuss it with most of his advisors, and also keeps the alliance a secret from the Severan population at large. If word of the agreement and its consequences were to spread, it might cripple his authority with his citizens, and with many of his line officers.

## Redirect the Attacker

WAAAGH! Grimtoof's arrival preceded the [Astra Militarum](#)'s presence in the [Spinward Front](#). Prior to their arrival, Duke Severus XIII was not fully prepared to initiate his secession from the [Imperium of Man](#). Were it not for the Ork invasion, the planets beyond the Periphery Sub-sector might have remained ostensibly under Imperial authority for another century, or more. The Imperial Guard arrived to stop the Ork incursion, but had to deal with the Severan Dominate's secession at the same time.

The [Orks](#) -- including their highest ranking examples -- appear to be undiscerning foes. They are generally content to brutally assault anyone that stands before them. The troopers of the [Astra Militarum](#) are also generally less than selective, launching attacks against whomever their officers target.

Consequently, the worlds of the Severan Dominate largely live or die based upon the decisions of the Imperial High Command on the [Spinward Front](#). Any time the Orks and the [Astra Militarum](#) battle one another, the Secessionists are relieved to watch their deadliest foes combat one another.

Instigating such battles has become a key goal for the Secessionist officers. To date, they have had little confirmed successes in this strategy. In spite of that, the duke has commanded his officers to pursue this path whenever possible. He has even discussed what approaches might be most effective to lure the WAAAGH! away from the holdings of the Severan Dominate, and towards the worlds of the Calixis Sector.

If the Traitors could somehow redirect the Orks, it would buy the Severan Dominate a tremendous degree of flexibility to reassign existing forces, and also to provide some additional relief to its frontline units.

At issue is the fact that the Secessionists have no effective means of communicating with the Orks. In essence, any time the [xenos](#) begin a conversation, it inevitably ends in another assault. This is partially due to the limitations of their communications, but also due to the fact that the Severan Dominate worlds are distressingly close to the WAAAGH!'s path of migration.

Similarly, the Imperium's theocratic doctrine prohibits them from ignoring the presence of Traitors in their midst. There can be no mercy for the Traitor. The Imperium has thoroughly cleansed the worlds they have recovered of any who might maintain loyalty to the Secessionist cause. Trying to focus the Imperial assault on the [xenos](#) rather than the Traitor is not at all a trivial matter.

In spite of their frequent failures in using this approach, the Traitors have continued their efforts to attempt to employ it. They have leaked false maps and transmissions to the Orks. They have even used a number of voidcraft as bait, to lead trails between Ork-infested planets and the Imperium.

Similarly, the Severan Dominate has planted countless false [vox](#) distress beacons and sent out many cries for help towards the Imperium, with the intention of drawing vessels into systems controlled by the green menace. Even a minor encounter between these two groups can cost both sides tens of thousands of lives, and so any success is worth vast amounts of effort for agents of the Severan Dominate.

## Covert Operations

The Severan Dominate must do as much as it possibly can to undermine the effectiveness of their foes. From the perspective of the Secessionists, the vast armies they face are seemingly unstoppable entities.

As they unleash their resources, the invaders are capable of using their momentum to roll over worlds before an effective defence can even be mustered. In order to prevent this, the Traitors have begun to utilise a variety of different techniques that might delay the efficiency and effectiveness of their foes.

One tactic Secessionist agents frequently use involves infiltrating into the population of labourers attached to any Imperial unit. In many instances, simple acts of sabotage can result in disasters of epic proportions for the Imperium.

Simply altering the labels on boxed munitions can lead to crippling situations for the Imperium. Riskier actions, such as setting fires or using explosives, are also used selectively. As these actions are generally far more noticeable, they also tend to be much less survivable for the agents involved.

In a few cases, assassination attempts have been made against high profile Imperial and xenos officers. These actions have met with limited success, as the Secessionists ultimately lack the necessary resources to effectively train their agents. Similarly, the highest ranking invading Imperial and Ork officers tend to be particularly well-prepared for such attacks.

Part of the covert operations initiative is actually targeted against Imperial agents already present upon Severan Dominate worlds. After centuries of contact, even at a distance, with the Imperium, the majority of the Secessionist planets still have many citizens who remain loyal to [Terra](#).

In a number of cases, these citizens have begun to provide intelligence back to the Loyalists. Some of these agents are trained, but many are only amateurs, motivated to take action by their beliefs and hunted by the more zealous of the Ducal Legates.

## Psychological Warfare

Duke Severus XIII overcame his family's history of ignominy through his impressive talents as a politician and negotiator. Admittedly, a certain amount of his success came through luck, and carefully working to avoid any attention. Yet it must be acknowledged that his deceptions successfully persuaded the citizens of numerous Imperial worlds to swear fealty to his cause.

This must be considered a clear sign that he is a talented and charismatic leader. Because of his past successes in this field -- and failures in so many others -- the duke believes that the same skills may serve as an effective tool within the context of war. His plans in this regard are still at a formative and experimental stage, but several of his advisors have already acknowledged that the plans seem to have merit.

During the earliest stages, the Secessionists have focused their psychological efforts upon the troopers and line officers of the Imperial Guard. To date, all of their efforts have been focused on encouraging desertion among the ranks.

If possible, they have often attempted to persuade the soldiers to give their loyalty to the Secessionist cause instead, though this extreme of a change has met with far less success. To achieve this very difficult goal, the Traitors began by choosing a very simple message, utilising as many delivery mechanisms as possible.

The key to their message was to convince the Imperial soldiers that the Secessionists were the ones acting in the right. They have tried to support this message by reminding the invaders that the Severan Dominate worlds remained steadfast in their faith in the [God-Emperor](#).

This is then supported by the evidence of their tactical practices. The fact that Duke Severus limits offensive actions actually plays in to support this message. Their limited direct actions

against the Imperial units provide ample support for the message that the Secessionists are reluctant to take their battle to the Imperium.

Of course, delivering this message to the thoroughly trained soldiers of the [Astra Militarum](#) is extremely difficult. The most loyal of soldiers are already under orders to ignore any enemy propaganda. Because of this, the most effective means to distribute such information requires that the Secessionists have active agents operating among the Imperial forces.

Limited training restricts the number of possible candidates. However, in their time of desperation, the Duke is perfectly willing to send this message out in as many ways as is reasonably possible. Because of this, he has instructed a number of his citizens to pretend to turn traitor, so that they can spread their message of revolution into the Imperium.

## Supply Lines

Because of the current stresses upon his resources, the duke has presented one scenario where he considers it acceptable to initiate higher risk offensive actions. This specifically regards any actions which might be taken to secure supplies.

Successes in such endeavours represent an effective double win for the Secessionists. Not only do they obtain additional assets to prosecute their war effort, they also manage to deny those same assets to their foes. In at least two cases in the [Spinward Front](#), Imperial assaults floundered, and turned short conflicts into extended campaigns, when Secessionists secured equipment that had been intended for Loyalist troops.

Before they can initiate strikes of this style, the Severan Dominate requires two critical tools in their arsenal. The first is accurate intelligence about the Imperial supply lines. The second is units and equipment appropriately trained to seize and reassign the supplies in question.

For better or worse, the Secessionists have a very constrained supply of both of these. Information about the supply lines generally comes from native workers who have been forcibly inducted into slave labour groups. These workers have limited access to information and few means of communicating. However, their data are often very accurate.

Alternative sources of this information tend to be individuals who have ready access to the [Astra Militarum](#) officers' clubs and mess halls. In a few instances, pirates have even managed to identify common transit patterns for Imperial transports.

It is critical to note that none of these sources are particularly reliable. Missions that endanger a significant force to capture unconfirmed supplies are often riskier than even the most desperate Secessionists are willing to undertake.

Forces committed to stealing supplies must be swift moving and have a significant cargo capacity. In many instances, the Secessionists' mobile assets have been disassembled, so that their components might be used to build defensive structures.

An alternative solution has been to steal the vehicles carrying the cargo at the same time as the target supplies. This strategy is, of course, less effective when targeting a supply depot that has been left lightly defended. In other instances, transport vehicles have proven to be far better defended than the depots, which presents another set of challenges.

After several early successes, the Imperium has become cognizant of the Severan Dominate's tendency towards targeting its supplies. They have recently begun to leak false information to the Secessionists about timing and security of various deliveries.

In two attacks since this change in tactics, the Traitors were defeated without a significant loss of Imperial life. This change in strategy is quite recent, so it remains unclear how the Severan Dominate may respond to this new development in Imperial tactics.

Comparable strikes against [xenos](#) supplies have been far more limited. This is largely because the Secessionists are far less able to make effective use of any equipment that they might recover. Missions of this type have been used, and likely remain a critical component to the

Severan strategy, but they are only executed in much lower risk situations.

## Notable Worlds of the Severan Dominate

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*"Beyond the boundaries of the Imperium, there are yet worlds where humanity dwells without knowing the grace of the Immortal Emperor. It is our responsibility to shine His light upon them."*

— Rogue Trader Bastille the Sixth

The [Spinward Front](#) represents worlds near the very border of the [galaxy](#). Some might assume that there would be far fewer stars and even fewer habitable planets than within the more central portions of the galaxy.

As [Humanity](#) explored the region, they found that belief to be sorely mistaken. Though the reasons remain unclear, the stars located within this region -- particularly those under the control of the Severan Dominate -- have a disproportionately high number of habitable worlds. Few are ideal for Human habitation, but a surprisingly high percentage are capable of supporting self-sustaining colonies.

### Cuyavale

#### Climate

The world's surface is covered by massive, temperate rain forests. Huge trees, more than a hundred metres in diameter at their bases, extend over a kilometre into the heavens.

Closely packed, these enormous plants completely block out the primary's light from ever reaching the ground. Consequently, those creatures that live among the arboreal heights know a normal day-night cycle, while those that dwell in the shadow of the trees live in perpetual darkness.

While Cuyavale does enjoy some seasonal variation in climate, the massive boles of the world's trees limit these changes. The trees shelter all who dwell at ground level from any prevailing winds in the fall, and provide relief from the sun's heat in the summer.

Few of the enormous trees shed their leaves seasonally. Though there is ample detritus among the shadows of these massive living organisms, little of it comes from the trees themselves. Instead, the animals and lesser plants that live on and among the trees create their own ecosystems, which are often dependent upon the trees.

After considering the trees, the most significant of Cuyavale's life forms are the Drakons. These fearsome apex predators pose a significant threat to any life that travels upon the world. This is, in part, due to the creature's unusual life cycle. Though they can grow to enormous size -- reports indicate mature specimens may have a wingspan in excess of 250 metres -- the flying reptiloids begin life at a far smaller scale.

During their mating season, mature female Drakons create nests among the planet's few arid mountains. These nests are invariably on the borders of the mountainous regions, where they abut with the forests. When the eggs mature and hatch, each nest can unleash thousands of ravenous, metre-long hatchlings upon the unprepared temperate rainforests.

In the solar weeks that follow, those destructive young often strip hundreds of square kilometres bare as they destroy all life, as well as a significant proportion of their siblings. Only a small percentage of each litter survive this period of frenzied hunting, leaving only the strongest and canniest an opportunity to reach maturity.

In the years and decades that follow, the young Drakons continue to grow in size, often preying upon other members of their species at the same time as they devour the world's other life forms. [Explorator](#) survey reports indicate that during the early years of their development, Drakons may grow more than a metre each year, though this rate seems to be largely dependent upon the availability of prey organisms.

Because of this, Drakons are fiercely territorial, interacting with other members of their species only during the breeding season. The largest specimens are believed to be many centuries in age, and are fiercely protective of their own domains, savaging anything (be it a lone explorer, an infantry formation, or a main battle tank) that wanders too close to it.

## History and Culture

The origins of [Human](#) civilisation upon Cuyavale are unclear. Initial [Imperial](#) studies indicate that the world's two populations -- one subterranean and the other arboreal -- both originated at roughly the same time.

However, the reasons for their split and continued isolation are lost to time. As there are no known surviving records that predate [Humanity](#)'s activity in the region prior to the [Great Crusade](#) in the late 30th Millennium, none are certain when the region might have been first colonised. [Adeptus Mechanicus](#) agents might be able to make an estimate after obtaining biological samples, but there are currently no records of anyone conducting such a test.

Humanity first began to colonise Cuyavale in the distant prehistory of the [Age of Technology](#) before the time of the Great Crusade. When remnants of the [Angevin Crusade](#) reached the distant world in the 39th Millennium, they were surprised to discover the hallmarks of Human life.

Further exploration soon revealed two separate populations, which continued to thrive in spite of the world's deadly predators. After re-establishing contact, the [Ecclesiarchy](#) committed missionaries to the world, so that the surviving Humans might learn the glory of the Emperor.

While the [Imperial Creed](#) now flourishes upon the planet, their physical distance from the remainder of the [Calixis Sector](#) has limited the amount of interaction between Cuyavale and the agents of [Terra](#).

The arboreal populations largely dwell within Cuyavale's enormous trees. These Humans seldom descend to the world's surface, and many spend their entire lives within the boughs of a small grove of trees. Communities are entirely dependent upon the bounty of the tree in which they dwell, and the organisms that live among the enormous plants.

While many of these species are able to directly exploit the tree's biological processes, others merely take advantage of the microclimates that the trees create. These include a broad range of arboreal animals, as well as lesser plants and fungal analogues that have evolved to dwell among the trees. The native Humans who live in this environment have domesticated many of these plants for agricultural purposes.

In contrast, the subterranean population lives far beneath the trees, among caves, believed to be the remnants of water flows and root networks that have long since rotted away. These natives are accustomed to lives of perpetual darkness. Their diets are largely based upon fungal growths and the few animals that dwell in the deep shelter of the trees, as they live in perpetual fear of, but relative safety from, the planet's Drakons.

Since the advent of the Severan Dominate, the Secessionist stellar nation has drawn recruits from both of Cuyavale's Human populations. Some of these forces have been used in defensive efforts directly upon the planet, as [Ork](#) forces have recently begun to assault the world.

To date, the Orks have focused much of their efforts on attempts to tame the massive Drakons at the same time as they engage the disparate Human communities. So far, the xenos have had early success in controlling the Drakons, with at least one beast serving as a sort of aerial transport for the violent Orks.

## Fourtheden

As an [Agri-World](#), Fourtheden provides a substantial portion of the Severan Dominate's food supply. The vast majority of the Secessionists' strategic reserve came from tithes taken from this planet.

If the duke lost his hold on the world, several others might fall in short order. Without its bounty, the Secessionists would be unable to provide the necessary supplies to a number of worlds that rely upon imported foods.

Consequently, this system and its agricultural bounty represent a key holding to the rebel forces.

## Climate

Fourtheden enjoys a very mild climate and only slight seasonal changes. This is largely due to the fact that the world has a nearly circular orbit around its system primary, and only the slightest of axial shifts. These factors combine to yield a world with a perpetual growing season. Both the native organisms and the Humans who have made it their home have adapted to take advantage of the ongoing harvests.

With little seasonal variation, surface temperatures are almost always comfortably within the ranges ideal for Human life. For much of the world, rainfall is a daily event, but severe storms are exceptionally rare.

Throughout the world's recorded history, there have only been two cataclysmic storms, both of which only had a significant impact on coastal habitats and the surrounding regions. With the exception of the world's tropical regions and its poles, Fourtheden typically has daily weather which is reminiscent of a late spring day.

The most substantial variations to the world's climate are largely regional, due to geographic factors. For example, temperatures are far cooler near the poles and in some of the more elevated regions. In contrast, the areas nearer the planet's equator are substantially warmer. Even in these less hospitable regions, the natives have identified useful plants that produce abundant harvests.

The system's native life forms are almost never hostile to Terran life. In fact, the only organisms which seem capable of significantly interfering with agriculture are specimens that Humans imported during Fourtheden's colonisation.

It is unclear why the world's native species are so easily controlled, particularly given the world's inherent suitability for agriculture. Some more radical agents of the [Adeptus Mechanicus](#) posited that the entire planet might be a construct, designed specifically for agricultural purposes.

However, those agents were never able to accumulate any concrete evidence to corroborate such theories, and so they remain largely baseless suppositions.

## History and Culture

Imperial forces first discovered Fourtheden during the waning days of the [Angevin Crusade](#). By that time, High Command had already recommitted the majority of its forces to other war efforts. Expansion of the Imperium remained a primary goal, but the crusade was considered a success, as the entire region that would eventually become the [Calixis Sector](#) was safely secured.

By this point, the exhausted forces of the extended campaign were more than adequately prepared to enjoy a well-earned rest. Even though the world appeared bountiful, its discovery came too late for the commitment that completing securing it would require. Instead, Imperial forces chose to only commit a minimal colonising effort to Fourtheden.

The system was simply too far removed from more established worlds and major [Warp](#) routes for the Imperium to properly integrate it into the [Calixis Sector](#). Given its distance from the more civilised regions, High Command only undertook any effort at all because it was too promising of a jewel to ignore.

[Explorator](#) reports strongly indicated that, with a minimal effort, a small group of colonists could establish a thriving population in relatively short order. An initial commitment of less than a million Imperial citizens soon proved this prediction true. In less than a standard

century, much of Fourtheden's surface was colonised, and dozens of small communities and trading centres emerged.

Ultimately, Fourtheden's early success played a key role in the development of the other worlds beyond the [Periphery](#). Its surplus bounty provided both additional colonists and ample food supplies for nearby worlds.

Without its early success, colonies on many other worlds might never have survived. This same bounty played a significant role in Duke Severus XIII's decision to secede from the Imperium. Fourtheden's bounty of citizens and foodstuffs provide key elements necessary for the Severan Dominate to exist as an independent entity.

In spite of his dependence upon this bounty, Duke Severus XIII was readily willing to sacrifice a portion of it to help secure his stranglehold on the region. In exchange for their military support, the duke ceded the entire population of the world's southern hemisphere to the Children of Thorns [Kabal](#).

By carefully limiting communications -- and blaming it on a necessary part of the war effort -- the duke worked to isolate large portions of Fourtheden's population. As part of his negotiations with the [Drukhari](#), the [xenos](#) have gradually agreed to access more and more of the world.

Initially, they stripped the southern hemisphere bare of Human life -- [servitors](#) are the only forces now undertaking agricultural work in that region. More recent reports indicate that the Children of Thorns have begun to assault communities further north.

This might be a sign that negotiations have broken down, or it could be that Severus is even more desperate than previously believed.

## Karacallia

The Karacallia System contains an unusually high number of gas giants, many of which harbour resources of use to the [Adeptus Mechanicus](#) in the construction of [Warp-Drives](#). Though logged, the system's resources have never been properly exploited, its location some distance from the nearest [Forge World](#), making it a perilous undertaking and the war making it all but impossible.

The population of the Karacallia System is scattered across three-dozen and more satellites of the various gas giants and represents the descendants of a first wave of [Imperial](#) colonists dispatched there five standard centuries ago to populate the system and thus provide the raw manpower needed to exploit its resources in future generations.

But the scheme never reached fruition and, though the population has thrived numerically, it has suffered greatly from its isolation. Thus it was not difficult for Severus XIII to stoke the fires of rebellion on Karacallia, and the densely populated worlds are ripe recruiting grounds for the Dominate.

Of the dozens of populated worlds in the Karacallia System, not one is untouched by war. The Imperium has launched over thirty separate assaults since the beginning of the war and the [Orks](#) at least the same number. To date, none of these assaults has dislodged Severus' forces, which fight with almost unholy zeal.

Numerous [Astra Militarum](#) regiments have been committed to the system and, while substantial gains have been made in the past, most have been at the expense of losses elsewhere. While one satellite might be taken, another will fall, and so war ebbs and flows across the war torn moons and planetoids.

The surfaces of the worlds are cratered, corpse- and debris-strewn wastelands, poisoned by the lethal gases Severus' forces have unleashed and scoured lifeless by the weapons of the Imperium. The war there has been likened to an "island-hopping" campaign, with forces fighting for possession of the countless satellites and planetoids.



It is rare for any single world to be held by one side for more than a few solar months before the enemy dislodges it, but still the war grinds ever on, the system's location along the Calixis-Scarus Warp conduit making its possession vital.

## Kokytos

A tragedy of epic proportions, there is little good that can come from the continued war on Kokytos. Both the Imperium and the Severan Dominate have spent countless lives on its brutally frigid surface in battles that are unlikely to affect anything beyond the planet's boundaries.

Since the secession, leadership on both sides decided that this world could be a lynchpin in the war. Even though this belief is clearly false, all seem compelled by pride to honour that initial view and continuously escalate the engagement.

## Climate

The average daytime surface temperature on Kokytos is well below the freezing point of water. At night, it is significantly colder. Harsh winds continuously blow across its frigid surface. All of the planet's oceans are believed to be entirely enclosed by the seemingly endless ice and snow.

Ancient records indicate that Kokytos once had a robust population of indigenous life forms, including a broad variety of plants and animals capable of surviving under its extreme cold. Since the outbreak of war, sightings of these specimens have become progressively rarer.

Some posit that the species are dying from the increasingly dangerous conditions, while others suggest that the surviving species have simply gone into isolation to escape the ongoing extreme cold.

Prior to the Severan Dominate's secession, much of the world's Human population was largely self-sustaining, as they dwelt within isolated domes, designed to protect their communities from the extreme weather. Vast hydroponic gardens were maintained by each of the communities, providing the citizens with ample food supplies that could be renewed throughout the seemingly endless cold.

However, virtually all of these cities were destroyed in the opening solar months of the battle to control Kokytos. This has left most of the planet's population struggling to survive in the brutal environment with little in terms of survival gear or food.

Unless something is done to change the severity of the environment, it is unlikely that any of the local population will survive the war effort, regardless of who might ultimately win.

## History and Culture

Native legends suggest that Kokytos was initially colonised by Humanity when it was a temperate planet, with a climate well-suited to Human habitation. This ancient effort took place long before the time of the [Great Crusade](#) in the [Age of Technology](#), as the world and its population were only reconnected with the Imperium during the waning days of the [Angevin Crusade](#).

By that time, its climate had substantially changed -- apparently, an ice age had begun in the intervening millennia. A few surviving records from the initial contact between the explorers and the local population suggest that the world's natives were anxious to leave the world for a warmer climate.

Unfortunately for the inhabitants, early exploration revealed that Kokytos possessed a substantial reserve of [promethium](#), deep beneath its icy crust. In short order, the population were assigned the task of mining this valuable resource for the good of the Imperium.

When the War of Secession erupted, Imperial forces targeted Kokytos, under the belief that the world's promethium reserves represented a critical asset for the war effort. The Severan Dominate exerted a significant effort so that they might retain access to these same reserves.

Ultimately, this decision was a tragic mistake, as the planet's promethium supply is now largely exhausted. Now, with little of value, both sides continue to wage a grim war across the cold and barren surface for control of a near-worthless rock.

## Kulth

The [War World](#) of [Kulth](#) is the strategic lynchpin of the [Spinward Front](#), for it occupies a unique position in relation to the numerous factions intent upon conquering the [Periphery](#). Kulth bestrides the Calixis-Scarus Warp conduit and is the last Imperial planet within the borders of the Periphery Sub-sector before the route plunges into the lawless voids of inter-sector [Wilderness Space](#).

Its orbit is strewn with countless void-docks constructed to accommodate [Warp](#) vessels laying over on their way to or from the [Scarus Sector](#). Yet with the coming of the war, most of these have fallen silent and cold, while others have become low-gravity, vacuum-haunted warzones in their own right.

The [War World](#) of Kulth, capital of the [Periphery Sub-sector](#)

The surface of Kulth was once considered an arcadia, its rolling hills and fertile, grassy plains ripe for different types of exploitation. It was Duke Severus I's dream that the world would become a haven for the nobles of the nascent [Calixis Sector](#), and it was to that end that he built his own soaring palace on the glittering coast of the primary continent.

This formidable pile was wrought from marble of deep crimson, and so became known as the Sanguine Palace. He issued invitations to those military leaders that had served under him to come to Kulth and receive his patent of nobility, hoping to establish a hierarchical order with himself at the apex and numerous vassal lordlings owing him fealty.

For several standard years, it appeared that the first Duke Severus' dream might be realised. Then, [Drusus](#) was elevated to the rank of the first Lord Sector of Calixis, and one of his first deeds was to create a stable and prosperous region out of the war-torn ruin left in the wake of the Angevin Crusade.

The [Calyx Expanse](#) became the Calixis Sector and it was carved up into sub-sectors, each with its own prefect and capital world. Kulth was declared the capital of the [Periphery](#), a term Severus perceived straight away as an insult to all his achievements during the crusade.

Despite the terms of his [Warrant of Trade](#), Severus I's world was ripped from him by Drusus' servants. A massive [Administratum](#) mission descended upon the verdant grasslands and set in motion the process by which Kulth was turned into the administrative centre of the new sub-sector.

Severus I lived out his days in the faded glory of his coastal palace, closing its shutters to block the sight of the Adeptus Administratum presence sprawling across the land. Within a few solar decades, Severus was dead, though his line clung on to possession of his palace and a scant few other holdings.

Meanwhile, a huge Imperial workforce raised up the labyrinthine administration necessary to oversee an entire sub-sector. The orbital voiddocks were constructed and Kulth became a busy shipping hub, its wealth founded not on patents of nobility, but on levies placed on the Imperial shipping passing to and from the neighboring [Scarus Sector](#).

Despite the bitter fate of the line's sire, the scions of the first Duke Severus remained on Kulth, stoking their hatred of Drusus and all his works yet forced to hide it from all around them. House Severus' palace grew ever more tumbledown, yet the family retained sufficient income from its off-world concerns to cling on to a vestige of nobility, if not true power.

When at last Duke Severus XIII finally clawed his way to the rank of Lord Sub-sector of the

Periphery, he retained his house's palace as his court as an act of remembrance to his long dead forebear. Over the course of several standard years, Severus carried out a ruthless, yet largely unseen, purge of Kulth's adepta presence until ultimately, only those loyal to him and his line occupied positions of true power.

House Severus' palace became a bustling noble court frequented by a curious mixture of sycophants and murderers, those who would do anything to remain in favour and those willing to kill anyone for a fee. Beneath the outward displays of fealty boiled a heady mix of decadence and [heresy](#), epicurean dilatants competing for favour with [xenos](#) assassins in the dusty, decrepit halls.

Then came [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#). Initially, it was only those worlds beyond the Periphery's borders that suffered the [Orks'](#) predations and it was many solar months before the full extent of the crisis was realised on Kulth. Even then, Severus XIII believed he could hold the barbarous xenos at bay using the forces under his command, without compromising his ambitions by beseeching the Calixian Lord Sector for assistance.

He was proved wrong in short order and saw no alternative but to declare the secession of the Severan Dominate from the Imperium. Kulth is now a scorched, corpse-strewn wasteland, its continents carved up into the ever-shifting territories of whichever army has most recently committed the most resources to taking it.

The Sanguine Palace still stands, protected from orbital strike by multiple [Void Shield](#) domes thought to have been acquired by pacts with outcast factions of the [Cult Mechanicus](#). The palace is surrounded on all quarters by the most formidable defences on all of Kulth and has never fallen, though both the Imperium and the Orks have come close to taking its outer precincts on several occasions.

The battle for Kulth has been raging for 83 standard years, the fates of each faction waxing and waning as entire armies are fed into the meat grinder. At times, one party has all but crushed another, only to be counter-attacked by the third.

At present, the Severan Dominate is confined to one part of the world's primary continent, while the vast bulk of the fighting rages between the forces of the Imperium and the Orks. How long this state might last is a question beyond even the most gifted of strategic precognosticators, however, and it could switch at any moment.

It is to Kulth that the majority of newly raised [Astra Militarum](#) regiments are likely to be sent, for its savage battle zones chew through men and machines at a rapacious rate. The world is a war zone in its own right, the Imperium's forces commanded by [Lord General](#) Ghanzorik in person. The Imperium's Kulth High Command is well-established in a formidable chain of bastions and fortresses near the world's north pole, known as Fort Drusus (a title Severus XIII believes to be a deliberate insult), and this nigh impregnable ring of [ceramite](#) and [plasteel](#) is tested daily by the relentless frontal assaults of the Orks.

Those [Imperial Guardsmen](#) that survive more than a few days soon learn that very little on Kulth is permanent, the front line shifting kilometres each and every day. No sooner is a position carried than it is lost to counter-attack; no sooner is a garrison established than the defenders are shipped out to bolster another assault.

Ghanzorik is the most dogged of leaders, and those serving beneath him hold him in a mixture of respect and fear. Most know that he will do anything to fulfil his duty to the [Emperor](#), but that this includes sacrificing countless numbers of his own troops should he deem it necessary. Not for nothing is Ghanzorik known by many on the front line as "Old Steel and Blood," a title the dour old general is said to secretly revel in.

As the supreme commander of the Imperium's military forces on the [Spinward Front](#), General Ghanzorik is an officer with a fearsome reputation, as much amongst his own staff as his enemies. He was commissioned into the 61st [Maccabian Janissaries](#) in 775.M41, and in 780.M41 his regiment was dispatched through the [Jericho-Maw Warp Gate](#) to serve in the hellish war zones of the [Jericho Reach](#).

Over two solar decades, Ghanzorik proved himself an able leader, his regiment primarily engaged prosecuting the wars of the [Achilus Crusade's Orpheus Salient](#). Of the sights he witnessed during those bloody years, Ghanzorik rarely speaks, but he is known to have sustained a number of grievous wounds while commanding his troops from the very front.

Upon receiving one such wound that almost proved fatal, Ghanzorik was informed of his ascension to the Imperial General Staff and, while he initially protested what he saw as the loss of his regiment, he soon found himself commanding entire army groups, where his courage, tactical skill, and determination found an entirely new expression.

With the secession of the Severan Dominate and the establishment of the [Spinward Front](#), Ghanzorik was raised up still higher, granted the title [Lord Marshal](#) and given the grave responsibility of repulsing an Ork invasion, putting down a pernicious rebellion, and bringing order to a region of space long known for its lawlessness.

Ghanzorik soon earned his nickname, committing countless troops to the Relief of Kulth. Yet, despite his initial success in holding the Orks at the sub-sector's capital world, Ghanzorik appears to be operating with one hand tied behind his back. The situation in the Spinward Front is dire indeed, and seemingly warrants far more military resources than have been assigned to it.

While the most highly placed in the sector's military authorities understand there is a grave need to send forces through the Jericho-Maw Warp Gate and to use the Spinward Front as a cover for the high levels of recruitment, others believe that a deliberate policy exists to ensure that the Severan Dominate and the Orks of WAAAGH! Grimtoof grind each other to mutual destruction.

How complicit "Old Steel and Blood" might be in such a conspiracy, none can say, nor can they predict how he might react if he himself discovers the truth.

### Imperial Forces Present on Kulth

[Lord General](#) Ghanzorik's forces represent the greatest operational concentration of the Imperium's military resources in the entire [Calixis Sector](#), but still they are insufficient to strike the decisive blow that will take the world once and for all. At the last estimate, they numbered at least five million troops, around two thirds serving in front line combat units and the remainder committed to second line reserve and support formations.

In addition to these, countless more are engaged in the ceaseless logistical duties by which such a large force is maintained. Regiments are drawn from all over the Calixis Sector and every world able to raise a tithe is represented in Ghanzorik's armies. With the events surrounding the recent rise of the [Daemon](#) known as the Dei-Phage who was mistakenly believed to be the resurrection of [Saint Drusus](#), numerous regiments have been drafted in from sectors much further afield, at least in part to ensure their loyalty cannot be called into question.

These include regiments from [Cadia](#), [Tallarn](#), [Vostroya](#) and many other famed [Astra Militarum](#) homeworlds. Rather than being raised specifically for the war on Kulth, these regiments have been drawn from the [Segmentum Obscurus](#) reserves or re-tasked and diverted from whatever operations they were initially raised to undertake.

Some are long-service veterans with more than a decade of experience at the front line, but they will be bitterly disappointed if they expect to be assigned to fight a battle from which victory might derive settlement rights. The war on Kulth is expected to grind on for decades to come.

Amongst the Imperium's forces on Kulth can be found every type and variation of fighting force. The Astra Militarum is an incredibly varied organisation and so even the main line infantry regiments range from small bodies of heavily-armed-and-armoured [Grenadiers](#) to massive formations equipped only with the crudest mass-produced weaponry.

Supporting these infantry forces are artillery regiments fielding every imaginable form of heavy gun from massed mortars to super-heavy self-propelled artillery. Leading the infantry

in their massed assaults are the tank companies, most equipped with the ubiquitous workhorse of Astra Militarum armoured forces -- the venerable [Leman Russ](#) main battle tank.

Others go to war in the fearsome [Baneblade](#) or one of its variants, each so heavily armed it can slaughter hundreds of foes or even strike down the lumbering [Gargants](#) the Orks use as their version of Imperial [Titans](#).

Mechanised infantry regiments ride to war in [Chimera](#) armoured personnel carriers, while numerous other regiments utilise all manner of riding beasts in the mode of classic mounted cavalry. A small number of regiments operate as Drop Troopers, and "Old Steel and Blood" is fortunate to have a corps of [Elysian](#) regiments at his disposal, for these are amongst the finest exponents of aerial and orbital assault in the entire Astra Militarum.

The majority of these forces are stationed at Fort Drusus, or at least mustered there before being assigned to one of the numerous front lines stretching across millions of kilometres of Kulth's surface. Fort Drusus is a sprawling base the size of a city, its landing fields never silent as millions of tonnes of materiel are shipped in each and every day along with fresh meat for the front lines.

Newly drafted regiments are lucky to be granted more than a solar day to acclimatise to Kulth's atmosphere, which most note tastes like ash and smells of ballistic propellant -- a sensation they soon grow used to if they live long enough.

Having marched or ridden out of Fort Drusus' mighty Aquila Gate, few ever return alive unless their regiment has suffered such a mauling it is forced to withdraw for reconstitution. Most only make the return journey through the Aquila Gate in a [Departemento Munitorum](#) body-bag, having given their all for the [God-Emperor](#) of [Mankind](#).

### Ork Forces Present on Kulth

The forces of Ghenghiz Grimtoof Git-Slaver's [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#) are even more varied than those of the [Astra Militarum](#), so much so that Imperial intelligence cells have long since abandoned hope of tracking their composition.

Instead, the Imperium focuses on estimating the numbers of warbands present and the numbers of Ork "[Boyz](#)" that make up each one. At present, it is estimated that the Git-Slaver has committed at least ten million [Ork Boyz](#) to Kulth, with countless more of the slave creatures known as [Gretchin](#) (or sometimes [Grots](#)) being herded into battle alongside, or often in front of them.

Of more use to the Imperium than crude numbers are details of what types of war machine the enemy can field. Ork forces tend to be a ramshackle riot of troops either swarming forward on foot or riding a range of mechanically improbable vehicles from light bikes to heavy [Battlewagons](#).

Some field large amounts of artillery, partly looted from a range of enemies but much of it patched together from scrap. Some field combat walkers of varying sizes and configurations, while others equip their foremost warriors with suits of armour as heavy as the [Space Marines'](#) formidable [Terminator Armour](#).

While there appears to be little in the way of logic or pattern to the composition of most Ork warbands, there are some that eschew any hint of balance and focus entirely on one type of force, often for no obvious reason other than the crudely expressed tastes of whichever leader has risen to power.

Some warbands ride to war packed into fast but lightly armoured transports, those that reach the [Astra Militarum](#) lines leaping out directly into the defenders' midst to unleash bloody mayhem. Others field only huge mobs of combat walkers, from light [Killa Kans](#) to [Stompas](#) almost the size of a [Scout Titan](#).

It is rare for Orks to invest much in static defence, though they often "upgrade" those Imperial fortifications they capture. The greenskinned species is so bloodthirsty and violent that the

Git-Slaver's forces are far more likely to operate on the offensive.

Frontal assaults so large the landscape seethes with alien bodies from one horizon to the next are not uncommon, the mighty [Gargants](#) stomping forward with their characteristic gait, unleashing firepower sufficient to flatten entire fortresses. The Orks revel in such displays of crude power, every one bellowing the praises of their primitive gods.

To an Astra Militarum trooper manning the trench line for the first time, such a spectacle is sufficient to shatter the mind. Often the only thing more intimidating is the gaping muzzle of a commissar's [Bolt Pistol](#), held ready to gun down any who should flee.

While the Imperium's presence on Kulth is subject to the rigid command structure of the Astra Militarum and other military bodies, the Orks control their massive armies by way of the timeless principle of "might makes right."

Grimtoof Git-Slaver has ultimate control over his forces on Kulth and every other world in the region, and although he is most often to be found at his "kapital" of Avitohol, he makes regular appearances at the very front line of his armies on Kulth. The Boyz need a regular reminder, it seems, of just who is in charge.

When Grimtoof is not on Kulth, command is delegated in typically Orkish fashion to whichever of the warlords is strongest. At present, a particularly psychopathic warlord known as "Zog the Zerker" is acting as Grimtoof's second.

It remains to be seen if Zog will overstep the bounds of his authority and suffer Grimtoof's wrath or actually become strong enough to challenge his overlord. It goes without saying that several Imperial bodies, not least the [Ordo Xenos](#), are watching the situation closely.

### Severan Dominate Forces Present on Kulth

The armies of Duke Severus XIII are nowhere near as varied as those of the [Imperium](#) or the [Orks](#), as the Dominate possesses far fewer resources to draw upon in the appointment of their troops. The majority are infantry equipped with whatever weapons the [Planetary Defence Forces](#) of their homeworld were issued, and while some Dominate units appear almost indistinguishable from Astra Militarum units, others look more like a scruffy mob.

Despite the relative lack of resources compared to the Imperium, the armies of the Dominate still make use of the more common marks of Imperial war machines, including the [Leman Russ](#) battle tank and the [Chimera](#) armour carrier.

While the Astra Militarum makes only minimum use of locally-produced vehicles, the logistics train required to support such items being untenable over interstellar distances, the armies of the Dominate make extensive use of vehicle types rarely seen outside of the [Periphery](#). These include light tanks, ambulatory gun platforms, and a number of crude but remarkably tough ground attack aircraft.

What the armies of the Dominate lack in advanced wargear and vehicles, however, they more than make up for in quantity. Though the worlds within the Dominate are not hugely populated, they are close at hand. While the Imperium must ship troops in from further away, the Dominate's worlds are close by and its lines of communication correspondingly short.

In addition, Severus XIII has proved remarkably adept at manipulating the hearts and minds of his peoples, such that those fighting to defend Kulth are invested with a righteous zeal rarely faced by the Imperium. They truly believe that Kulth is sacred ground granted to them by the [Emperor](#) Himself and that the distant [High Lords of Terra](#) have broken faith with them and their lord by gifting it to weak puppets such as the Calixian Lord Sector [Marius Hax](#).

Nothing makes this more obvious than the spectacle of the Imperial [Aquila](#) scoured from uniforms and the flanks of vehicles to be replaced with the proud profile of Severus XIII, his head crowned with a wreath of laurels.

Despite their rejection of the High Lords, the defenders of Kulth regard themselves as faithful subjects of the God-Emperor and so many bear a wide variety of religious icons and personal

relics. Of course, none know what vile pacts their master has undertaken in the pursuit of power.

Since the coming of [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#) to Kulth, the armies of the Dominate have seen both huge gains and enormous setbacks. When the Orks first invaded, the defenders were horribly outmatched -- within solar weeks of the first enemy drops, those of Severus XIII's forces not slain were falling back on the Sanguine Palace.

When the Imperium came to Kulth's aid, the Orks were thrown back in disarray, but it was not long before events drove Severus to declare his secession and the liberators became the enemy too.

On three separate occasions, the armies of the Dominate have come within a hair's breadth of expelling the Imperium from Kulth, yet each time the Orks have counter-attacked, on Kulth or a nearby star system, necessitating a desperate redeployment to avoid total collapse.

The bones of Severus XIII's soldiers are now scattered across every square kilometre of Kulth's surface, but so too are those of their enemies, whether Imperial, Ork, or any other foe that would contest their Emperor-given right to their world.

## Lukius

Lukius is a star system entirely devoured by war, for it represents the line in the sand across which Severus XIII has vowed the Orks shall not advance. When it comes to the Dominate's war against [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#), the [War World](#) of Lukius is far and away the most vital battleground and the one to which Severus has committed the bulk of his forces.

It is probable that the Imperium's [Spinward Front](#) High Command are not even aware of the world's fate, for it lies on a trunk of the Calixis-Scarus Warp conduit and is, in effect, beyond the reach of the Imperium's conventional forces.

The native [Human](#) population of Lukius existed as primitive, tribal savages for many thousands of Terran years, but with the establishment of the Severan Dominate they have been dragged kicking and screaming into the 41st Millennium.

Iron Age barbarians used to conducting war with little more than sharp spears have been drafted *en masse* into the armies of the Dominate, equipped with mass-produced [Autoguns](#) and clad in ill-wrought battle dress. Many have suffered a form of combat psychosis as a result of this drastic change, while others have taken to the war with apparent relish.

These ramshackle armies go to war against the [Orks](#) of [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#) and, from a distance, an observer might have difficulty determining which is which. Certainly, both sides are brutal and bloodthirsty, preferring to establish the victor in the anarchy of melee combat.

But it is not only the natives of Lukius that fight there for the Severan Dominate. Forces drafted from across Severus XIII's realm are shipped to the continent-sized battle zones, sometimes travelling for solar weeks only to be scythed down within minutes of setting foot on the surface.

The Dominate's forces lack the long-established infrastructure of the [Departmento Munitorum](#), and so the armies might go hungry one month and run out of ammunition the next. Entire phalanxes of tanks might grind into action in majestic armoured assaults, only to run out of fuel before the battle is concluded.

Some of the more primitive amongst the Dominate's front line troopers have reached depths of savagery that would see them censured in the ranks of the Astra Militarum, gruesome trophy-taking being the least of their crimes.

It is whispered that some of the native Lukians have turned to the eating of the flesh of their enemies when their own supplies have run low, and perhaps found it to their liking. What consequences the vile habit of eating Ork flesh might have remains to be seen, as does what might ensue if and when Imperial forces face these savage Human warriors.

## Maesa

Maesa is a world in utter ruin. At one time it was classed by the [Administratum](#) as a [Frontier World](#), its population existing in a subsistence state in a number of scattered cities. When [WAAAGH! Grimtoof](#) descended upon Maesa, its people fought valiantly to defend their world, but ultimately had no chance of repulsing the overwhelming invasion.

Within six solar months, the world had fallen, the surviving populace rounded up by the [Orks](#) in slave pens holding thousands in the grimmest conditions imaginable. Though Imperial forces were too far distant to intervene, a small infiltration mission had been launched to observe the invasion, and it was this team who were the first to observe a change in the Orks' strategy.

Instead of slaughtering the defeated natives as they so often did, the Orks rounded them up and set them to work in vast, ramshackle labour camps producing arms and armaments for the [Warlord](#) Grimtoof's vast armies. This event marked a turning point in the Ork invasion and its significance was so great that the team set off on the perilous return to the [Spinward Front](#) High Command immediately.

Though only a few members of the infiltration team made it back, those that did carried such important intelligence that the [Imperial Navy](#) mustered a scratch task force of long-range [cruisers](#) and [escort](#) squadrons, and set out for Maesa without delay.

When they reached the planet, almost three solar months after its fall, they found a world transformed. The cities had become huge, ramshackled manufacturing centres and countless Ork vessels teemed in orbit as they loaded hundreds of thousands of tonnes of materiel every day.

The task force's orders were clear and, with a prayer upon his lips, the [admiral](#) commanding the task force ordered the cities razed to the ground by a massive orbital bombardment. The Ork slave labour camps were destroyed in a single night, their manufacturing capacity utterly ruined, along with hundreds of thousands of enslaved Maesans, whose souls were commended to the [Emperor](#).

Since this so-called "Scouring of Maesa," the world has been transformed into a warzone. The [Imperium](#) has launched several planetstrike operations there, but the bulk of the fight has been undertaken by the Human natives themselves. Those not slain in the Scouring rose up against their alien overlords and now fight the bitterest of wars through the ruins of their former homes.

The cities are blackened shells while the land all about is cratered and dead, yet still the Maesans fight on against the Orks. The [Warlord](#) Grimtoof was outraged by the Scouring, for he views the numbers of slaves in his service as a measure of his power and he has ordered them all recaptured or slain.

Though distant from the Imperium's front lines, the battle for Maesa looks set to rage on until one side or the other is defeated.

## Ohmsworld

A dense and toxic atmosphere makes Ohmsworld inimical to [Human](#) life. None visit the world or choose to live within its countless small spires because of the hideous environment and the dramatic weather.

Instead, most residents are the descendants of Human colonists who were compelled to live upon the planet due to its unusual mineral assets.

This is because the atmospheric contaminants make Ohmsworld a valuable holding. Through careful atmosphere filtration, the inhabitants can



obtain several chemicals and compounds key in the creation of [adamantium](#).

## Climate

The toxic spires of Ohmsworld

Nearly all of Ohmsworld's Human population dwell among the countless hive spires that dot the planet's surface. Though each is far less populous than a typical Imperial [hive city](#), many of these delicate spires are every bit as tall and nearly as broad.

This is largely because the enormous structures are little more than air filtration systems. A vast network of delicate strands, constructed of near-microscopic tendrils, which resemble minute feathers, filter the world's atmosphere through the hive spires.

As air constantly cycles past and through each hive city, the filters carefully identify and isolate the most valuable of the rare ores. The immeasurable numbers of microscopic tendrils capture flecks of each component -- far smaller than a grain of sand.

The filtration devices pass these precious elements to collection systems. The ore is then smelted into larger bars, which can be transported to off-world refineries and manufactoria.

As a side effect of the filtering, breathable air is directed to each hive spire's interior. This is an absolutely crucial effect, as without it, the world's inhabitants would be entirely dependent upon rebreathers. Oxygen is simply too rare for filtration plugs or gasmasks to suffice.

Most citizens who venture forth from the hive spires wear tanks of breathable atmosphere, as any extended foray upon the planet's surface is otherwise too dangerous. The situation is so extreme that there are no known populations of Humans -- or even [mutants](#) -- dwelling on the world, aside from those within the hive spires.

Due to the world's inherently toxic atmosphere, agents of the [Adeptus Mechanicus](#) have failed to identify any native life forms. They hypothesise that nothing dependent upon a carbon-oxygen life cycle could survive within the environment.

If any creatures live within the roiling atmosphere -- as local legends suggest -- it might be a creature whose biology is completely foreign to descendants of [Terra](#).

## History and Culture

There are few records of Ohmsworld's initial colonisation. The filtration towers represent one of the greatest technological marvels within the Severan Dominate, but their ultimate origins are unknown.

The technology is clearly consistent with [Adeptus Mechanicus](#) design, but there are no records of its creation outside of those jealously guarded by the Machine Cult. It may be that this world was colonised before the arrival of the [Angevin Crusade](#).

Recently, [Astra Militarum](#) forces began a significant push to secure Ohmsworld. This is in part an effort to secure the world's ore production, but also an effort to keep that same production from the Severan Dominate. The important caveat is that both the Secessionists and the Loyalists believe the hive spires are far too precious to risk damaging.

To date, most of the war's efforts have been battles conducted on open plains far from any hives, within the murk of the planet's toxic atmosphere. The few exceptions are instances where agents were able to penetrate a hive spire's security, so that Loyalist forces could enter the structures, fighting the resistance in brutal, room-to-room combat.

## Orbiana

The [Feral World](#) of Orbiana lies at the spinward extent of the Severan Dominate, representing the last [Human](#)-settled world along the Calixis-Scarus Warp conduit before that twisting route plunges into the benighted depths of inter-sector [Wilderness Space](#).

Orbiana itself is a wild, savage world of raging storms and unpredictable weather fronts, its

native population existing in a feral, nigh-atavistic state. Orbiting the world is a massive defence platform, its plasma generators cold and its capital-scale weapons staring unblinking in the deep void.

Though unconfirmed, it is thought that the platform must have been towed out past the [Periphery](#) in centuries gone by as a long-forgotten plan to defend the [Calixis Sector](#) against some now-extinct threat.

Perhaps it was forgotten or deemed that towing it back was not worth the vast effort it would surely require, but whatever the truth, it has orbited Orbiana ever since. Recently, Severus has ordered the station restored, though those few tech-adepts that still serve him have yet to succeed in doing so.

Orbiana has seen numerous Ork attacks throughout the course of the war, but it is too far from the Imperium's territory to come under direct assault from that quarter. Nevertheless, several highly-placed members of the [Spinward Front](#) High Command have expressed the opinion that an assault from the Dominate's spinward flanks might crush the Secessionists once and for all.

It is probable that these planners have no knowledge of the Orbiana defence platform and, were it to be restored to operational status before an Imperial assault was launched, the attackers might find themselves facing a well-prepared and potent defence where they least expected to discover it.

## Stalynthia

The barren landscape of [Stalynthia](#) belies its tremendous wealth. In fact, this [Mining World](#) is arguably the Severan Dominate's most valuable asset. Though it is incapable of sustaining itself -- the world simply cannot produce adequate food for its population -- Stalynthia provides almost enough metallic raw materials to fulfil the needs of all of the manufactoria still controlled by the Secessionists.

As long as they can harvest this planet's wealth and deliver the ores obtained to other star systems, the Severan Dominate is assured of at least some materials that they can commit to their war effort.

Of course, such wealth makes the planet a target for almost all of the groups involved in the ongoing war effort in the [Spinward Front](#).

## Climate

Stalynthia has a heavily polluted atmosphere, which retains heat to a nearly insufferable degree. Centuries of aggressive strip mining have heavily polluted the planet's surface and her atmosphere.

The air is thickly packed with particulates, reducing visibility to only a few metres on the clearest local days. At times, conditions can be so severe that surface navigation is entirely dependent upon radar signals -- even the brightest of headlights are unable to pierce the densely polluted air.

That same air is also extremely dangerous to the world's citizens. Mining operations are undertaken by all of the world's inhabitants, from the moment they can lift a shovel to the day they can no longer stand. Rather than digging deep beneath the planet's surface, all of these mines are open to the sky.

This has the benefit of reducing the number of collapses, as well as permitting virtually the planet's entire workforce to participate in isolating the most valuable of ores. However, even with the limited machinery in use, the constant digging has contributed to the increased air pollution. Dirt is constantly stirred up, and the planet's aggressive winds readily spin particulate matter into the atmosphere.

A comparatively small amount of surface water and an extremely level surface are believed to contribute to Stalynthia's violent winds. There are few objects to disrupt the air as it flows

across the world's surface. The gravitational effects of the planet's two small moons are believed to also play a substantial role in its violent atmosphere.

Rain seldom graces Stalynthia's surface, but dust storms are a very common occurrence. The more intense storms are capable of flaying the flesh from an exposed Human. Ironically, though Stalynthia's surface seldom sees direct sunlight, her surface is now far warmer than the legends suggest it might have been in the ancient past.

It is believed that the planet's pollution has darkened the atmosphere, enabling it to absorb substantially more heat. This also diffuses the heat and light, so that the temperature varies little from day to night, also showing little seasonal variation.

An additional consequence is that the planet's surface is always clouded in a gloomy twilight. Very few atmospheric craft are capable of travelling through Stalynthia's densely polluted air. The amount of matter suspended in the atmosphere is simply too destructive to traditional engines.

Most atmosphere-capable craft which even attempt to enter the atmosphere crash upon the surface as their systems become hopelessly fouled. This makes transport extremely inefficient, and makes any military operations on Stalynthia cumbersome at best.

## History and Culture

Not surprisingly, those who dwell upon the world have little knowledge of the value of its mineral wealth or of what a lynchpin their assets represent to the Severan Dominate. In fact, nearly all of Stalynthia's citizenry live in a state of near abject squalor.

It is not believed that this was always the case. Legends suggest that when Humanity first colonised Stalynthia, its atmosphere may have been far clearer, and that the world might even have once been well-suited for agriculture. It was only after [Imperial](#) explorers discovered the abundance of precious ores throughout the world's crust that the ecological disaster began.

In short order, virtually all of the world's citizens began to mine the surface. At first, this offered a degree of economic freedom to those who laboured to pry the valuable ores from the planet's crust.

In time, a greater and greater proportion of the population turned to this occupation. This continued until the planet's pollution problems began, and the amount of arable land began to drop.

Soon, members of the world's Imperial [nobility](#) began importing food and survival goods, which could be exchanged for the precious ores. Before long, virtually all of the miners were little more than indentured servants.

This was an ideal situation for Duke Severus XIII, as he could quickly convert their desperation into a revolutionary mindset.

## Thrax

Thrax is a [Frontier World](#) located on the Calixis-Scarus Warp route, its once tranquil, now war-torn plains host to an array of weird fungus forests. Thrax has suffered greatly at the hands of [WAAAGH! Grimgoof's](#) forces, yet Severus XIII has managed to cling tenuously to possession of the star system.

The world of Thrax and several of its moons are densely populated, though technology is rarely more advanced than the black powder stage thanks to the system's isolation.

It is likely that Thrax was settled by Human colonists long before the [Age of the Imperium](#) during the [Age of Technology](#) and never really integrated into the [Emperor's](#) domains, even over the course of the ten thousand years since the [Great Crusade](#).

Rather, Thrax's society has continued its lurching climb towards civilisation, the war on the Spinward Front setting it back millennia in one fell swoop.

The war has brought twofold suffering to the people of Thrax. On one hand, the advance of WAAAGH! Grimtoof has drawn numerous [Ork](#) warbands in search of slaves, and hundreds of thousands have been dragged off to serve in the Git-Slaver's foundries. In response, Severus XIII has drawn equally heavily upon the world, forcing hundreds of thousands more to join the ranks of his own forces in the defence of the Severan Dominate.

To make things worse still, the [Imperium](#) has launched a number of long-range strikes against Severus' bases on Thrax, though given the distance from the Imperium's front lines, these attacks are invariably short-lived and highly focused, designed to cause strategic disruption to the Secessionists' operations.

The largest and most recent was in 815.M41, when the [Astra Militarum](#) launched a planetstrike against Thrax. Nine entire regiments were committed to an operation in the world's southern hemisphere, the intention being to gain a lodgement which could be supplied by orbital drop as needed.

The landings were contested by a native force of roughly equal size, but the Astra Militarum should have been able to prevail given the time and space to bring their superior firepower to bear. Tragically, the landings coincided with a massive Ork slave raid and the landing force's orbital support was forced to withdraw in the face of the far larger enemy fleet.

Cut off, the Guardsmen fought on, though under attack by two enemies. Exactly how many were slain is impossible to ascertain, though it is believed that the Orks captured thousands of troopers and dragged them off as slaves to serve in Grimtoof's foundries.

A force of regimental size is believed to have broken out, however, the survivors vanishing into the wastes where they continue to operate as guerrillas, launching punishing attacks on Severus' forces and living off of the alien land.

## Rogue Psyker Threat

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One of the greatest threats to the continued existence of [Mankind](#) is the ever-increasing number of [psykers](#) being born each year, for most prove too weak to resist the attentions of the creatures of the [Warp](#).

Within the Imperium, those born with or coming into psychic powers are swept up in regular psyker purges and those that survive are shipped off to [Terra](#) by the [League of Black Ships](#). Those worlds beyond the [Emperor's](#) light must conduct their own purges and witch hunts, slaying any that display the dread powers of the Wyrd.

As a consequence of Duke Severus XIII's secession from the Imperium, the systems by which psykers are detected and dealt with have all but collapsed in the Dominate and rates of psychic manifestation and outright [daemonic](#) possession have escalated by an order of magnitude.

To date, the Dominate's forces have contained the worst outbreaks, but it is surely only a matter of time before a rogue psyker emerges whose powers are too great for Severus' troops to put down.

Such beings are capable of turning entire armies into meat puppets or incinerating whole cities with a baleful glance. Some within the [Ordo Malleus](#) consider it a real danger that Severus may attempt to harness the power of such rogue psykers, if he has not done so already...

## Sources

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- *Only War: Core Rulebook* (RPG), pp. 346–348
- *Only War: Enemies of the Imperium* (RPG), pp. 8–31
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